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Sustainable development:

Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Bali, 2007, and its follow-up

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/86, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report to it at its sixty-third session on the work of the Conference of the Parties. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

1. Summary

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference was held in Bali, Indonesia, from 3 to 14 December 2007. It included the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.[1] The Bali Conference was the biggest climate change conference ever. It was characterized by a great desire of the parties to make progress, huge public interest and a good sense of common ownership of the outcome. There were nearly 11,000 participants, setting an attendance record, and the unprecedented level of media interest resulted in extensive coverage.

3. The outcomes achieved at Bali resulted from a remarkable year in the field of climate change. The year started off with the release of the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which demonstrated that climate change is unequivocal, that it can be confidently attributed to human activity and that business as usual would set the world on a dangerous course. Taking forward the message that the world needs to step up action, the Secretary-General convened a high-level event on climate change, which, along with other high-profile initiatives, further galvanized the political will of the world's leaders for negotiations on enhanced action on climate change.

4. The Conference achieved a breakthrough by agreeing to the Bali road map as a decisive response from the world's Governments to new scientific evidence. The road map consists of a number of forward-looking decisions that represent various tracks essential to reach a climate-secure future. At its centre is the Bali Action Plan, which establishes the overall framework for a two-year negotiating process to enable fuller implementation of the Convention. The Action Plan reflects a common understanding of the fact that climate change affects all countries and that fighting it requires common efforts, by developed and developing countries alike.

[1] The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has 192 parties and the Kyoto Protocol has 182 parties (as at 13 May 2008).

5. Under the Kyoto Protocol track, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol established a timetable with detailed steps to be taken to complete negotiations on further emission reduction targets for industrialized countries by 2009.

6. The third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also launched the Adaptation Fund and established the Adaptation Fund Board. Unique to this Fund is that it capitalizes on the carbon market to provide resources for adaptation.

2. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

7. The 14 formal decisions adopted by the Conference, some of which are noted below, will further advance measures to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts.

8. The Bali Action Plan (decision 1/CP.13) establishes a comprehensive framework to enable fuller implementation of the Convention. Work will be conducted under a newly established subsidiary body known as the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention, which will complete its work in two years time for adoption at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, in Copenhagen. The work will be taken forward in five areas:

(a) Shared vision for long-term cooperative action;

(b) Enhanced national and international action on mitigation;

(c) Enhanced action on adaptation;

(d) Enhanced action on technology development and transfer to support action on mitigation and adaptation;

(e) Enhanced action on the provision of financial resources and investment to support action on mitigation and adaptation and technology cooperation.

9. Deforestation is an important component of future action. Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries was a key issue in Bali. Parties affirmed the urgent need to take further meaningful action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and adopted a programme of work to further methodological issues related to a range of policy approaches and provide positive incentives. The decision encourages Parties to support capacity-building and to undertake efforts, including demonstration activities, to address the drivers of deforestation.

10. Important progress was made on the issue of technology transfer, one of the key concerns of developing countries, which received renewed momentum. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties requested the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to prepare a strategic programme to scale up the level of investment for technology transfer to help developing countries address their needs for environmentally sound technologies and to provide financial support to developing countries for the implementation of the technology transfer framework.

11. Parties also agreed to reconstitute the Expert Group on Technology Transfer for a further five years. The Expert Group has been asked to pay particular attention, as part of its first two-year programme of work, to assessment of gaps in and barriers to the use of, and access to, financial resources. Furthermore, the Expert

Group will start working on developing performance indicators that can be used to regularly monitor and evaluate progress on the development, deployment and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Thus, the work of the Expert Group constitutes an important input into the discussions on a post-2012 technology transfer mechanism.

12. Finance, along with technology, is a central piece of the Bali road map. A comprehensive financial architecture for the post-2012 period is required to spur resources and technical support from developed countries for sustainable development in developing countries, and a variety of tools will be needed. It is within this context that the fourth review of the financial mechanism launched in Bali is of critical importance. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties also initiated work on the assessment of funding necessary to assist developing countries in implementing commitments under the Convention over the next GEF replenishment cycle, along with its continued consideration of the fourth review of the financial mechanism.

13. The implementation of the Convention continues, with 134 developing countries having submitted their initial national communications. Of those countries, more than 120 are currently engaged in the preparation of their second national communications, which will contain information relating to greenhouse gas inventories, vulnerability and adaptation assessments and mitigation measures. Industrialized countries (Annex I parties) were requested to submit their fourth national communications to the secretariat by 1 January 2006. As at 30 July 2008, 40 out of 41 Annex I parties had submitted their fourth national communication.

14. As at 31 July 2008, 38 least developed countries had prepared national adaptation programmes of action identifying priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate needs with regard to adaptation to climate change.

3. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and other activities under the Kyoto Protocol

15. The third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 11 decisions, strengthening implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and building the basis for future climate change policy.

16. The Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties agreed on a series of activities that should allow an in-depth consideration of the elements identified within its work programme, thus providing it with a clear basis for completing its work by 2009. In following this work programme, in 2008 the Ad Hoc Working Group will devote its efforts to the means to achieve mitigation objectives of Annex I parties to the Kyoto Protocol. During 2007, the Ad Hoc Working Group made good progress in understanding the mitigation potential of Annex I parties, and in its consideration of ranges of emission reductions it made use of the best scientific knowledge available, notably the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

17. At the third session, parties also decided on the scope and content for the second review of the Kyoto Protocol under its article 9 to be undertaken by the fourth session, in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. The review will be aimed at enhancing the implementation of the Protocol and elaborating on a number of

elements, particularly adaptation. The decision further put in motion a number of activities to prepare for the second review.

18. The launch of the Adaptation Fund was aimed at addressing the needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. To manage the Adaptation Fund, a governance structure has been devised, with the Adaptation Fund Board comprising representatives of parties. The Board will be serviced by a secretariat (the GEF secretariat) and a trustee (the World Bank). The Board, in its capacity as the operating entity of the Adaptation Fund, will supervise and manage the Fund under the authority and guidance of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The Fund will finance concrete adaptation projects and programmes that are country-driven and are based on the priorities of eligible parties.

19. The third session noted the remarkable progress achieved on the clean development mechanism, the number of activities having more than doubled over the previous year. The clean development mechanism passed the milestone of 1,000 registered projects in April 2008. Its projects have so far generated 135 million certified emission reductions and are anticipated to generate more than 2.7 billion certified emission reductions in the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. In the context of this fast-growing mechanism, emphasis was placed on continually reviewing and improving efficiency, transparency and cost-effectiveness, and on making adjustments as necessary. The Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol also referred to the need to develop standards that promote quality and consistency for designated operational entities in their work. Notable progress was also observed in terms of methodological tools that now cover a wide range of applications. Another priority, for both the clean development mechanism and joint implementation, was to further develop management indicators and to report on this work at the next session.

20. Parties also noted the importance of initiatives undertaken (including the Designated National Authorities Forum, the Nairobi Framework and the Clean Development Mechanism Bazaar) to overcome barriers to equitable regional distribution and contribute to broader participation in the clean development mechanism, especially among least developed countries, African countries and small island developing States. To this end it was decided to abolish fees for clean development mechanism project activities hosted in least developed countries, and Annex I parties were encouraged to consider providing further financial support to initiatives such as the Nairobi Framework. The Nairobi Framework, launched by the Secretary-General at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, is a joint effort of the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the World Bank and, since the Bali Conference, also the Economic Commission for Africa.

4. High-level segment

21. The joint high-level segment of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and the third session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the States Parties to the Kyoto Protocol was opened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. The high-level segment was also addressed by the Prime Minister of Australia, the

President of Palau, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and the Prime Minister of Singapore.

22. The presence of a number of Heads of State or Government at the Bali Conference was testament to the seriousness and urgency of climate change, and the sincerity of purpose with which the international community was willing to address it.

23. The Secretary-General committed the United Nations to provide assistance to parties in every way possible and promised to support the parties throughout the negotiating period and to help implement the outcomes. He mentioned that, to this end, the chief executives of the United Nations system had already begun to define a joint United Nations contribution on this issue.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

24. **The General Assembly may wish to:**

(a) **Take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary General;**

(b) **Note the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, hosted by the Government of Indonesia from 3 to 14 December 2007;**

(c) **Pledge its support to the negotiating processes established by the Bali road map;**

(d) **Invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference.**

II. Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and on the outcome of the observance of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/193, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-third session on the implementation of that resolution, including a report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa. The present report constitutes an update to the Assembly on principal activities that have been undertaken since the adoption of the resolution, including on the implementation of the Convention.

B. Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

1. Background

2. In its resolution 62/193, the General Assembly welcomed the adoption by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention at its eighth session, in its decision 3/COP.8, of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) and invited all parties, the secretariat of the Convention and other institutions and supporting bodies to cooperate and coordinate their activities for a successful implementation of the strategy. It also invited all parties to report on progress made in the implementation of the strategy. The Assembly further invited developed-country parties to the Convention and other Governments, multilateral organizations, the private sector and other relevant organizations to make resources available to affected developing countries for the implementation of the Convention. Inviting the States parties to the Convention to provide the new Executive Secretary with full support in the fulfilment of his mandate and in promoting the implementation of the Convention, the Assembly noted with appreciation the efforts of the secretariat to continue its administrative renewal and reform and to streamline its functions in order to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and bring them into line with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention.

3. Further, the Assembly invited the Executive Secretary, in coordination with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, to actively prepare for and participate in the sixteenth and the seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development with a view to ensuring that the Convention's core issues, in particular those relating to land degradation, drought and desertification, are duly considered in the context of sustainable development

during the deliberations of the review session, with a view to ensuring a successful outcome of the entire cycle of the Commission.

2. The ten-year strategic plan and its implementation

Context

4. Ten years after coming into force, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is increasingly recognized as an instrument that can make a lasting contribution to the achievement of sustainable development, poverty reduction and the delivery of ecosystem services in the global context of climate change. The Convention operates today in an environment that has evolved considerably since the treaty was first negotiated, presenting different opportunities and constraints. The policy environment has also changed considerably since the Rio Conference as a result of the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the expectation of increased support for Africa and the least developed countries and a stronger commitment to climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

5. The shrinking availability of arable land for food production, a reduced supply of safe water, a growing number of environmental refugees and migrants, and conflicts induced by scarcity of natural resources or the aggravated impact of national catastrophes are all factors that shed a sharper light on the combined effects of poverty and environmental degradation.

6. The scientific environment has benefited from the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and of the millennium ecosystem assessment, which have contributed to an improved understanding of the biophysical and socio-economic trends relating to land degradation in drylands and their impact on human and ecosystem well-being.

7. The financing environment has also evolved in the past decade, with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) becoming a financial mechanism of the Convention and official development assistance flows increasing again after a decade of stagnation, while resources for rural development and agriculture continue to decline. Pursuant to the Paris Declaration, donors have refocused their financing strategies to support country-driven priorities, based on poverty reduction strategy papers and other country-led development planning instruments. Lastly, various innovative financing instruments have emerged, including payments for global public goods, ecological services and carbon finance.

8. Against this background, the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in September 2007 in Madrid, adopted the ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), which is aimed at addressing the Convention's key challenges at all levels, capitalizing on its strengths, seizing opportunities provided by the new policy and financing environment and offering a revitalized common ground for all Convention stakeholders.

The strategy

9. The ten-year strategic plan and framework (the strategy) was introduced to the Assembly by the Executive Secretary of the Convention on 29 October 2007 in document A/C.2/62/7. The strategy has defined a mission and a vision of the Convention for the future. The vision of the strategy "is to forge a global partnership

to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability" (A/C.2/62/7, annex, para. 8). Its mission is "to provide a global framework to support the development and implementation of national and regional policies, programmes and measures to prevent, control and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought through scientific and technological excellence, raising public awareness, standard-setting, advocacy and resource mobilization, thereby contributing to poverty reduction" (para. 10). Further, the strategy contains four strategic objectives, namely, to improve the living conditions of affected populations; to improve the condition of affected ecosystems; to generate global benefits through effective implementation of the Convention; and to mobilize resources to support implementation of the Convention through the building of effective partnerships between national and international actors.

10. With a view to supporting the attainment of the strategic objectives, the strategy also contains five operational objectives that would guide the actions of all Convention stakeholders and partners in the short and medium term (3-5 years). Those objectives focus on advocacy, awareness-raising and education; policy framework; science, technology and knowledge; and capacity-building, financing and technology transfer.

11. While parties bear the main responsibility in implementing the strategy, the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies have been requested to revise their functioning and engage in strategic planning exercises aimed at optimizing their contribution to advancing the strategy. In this context, the two subsidiary bodies, the Committee on Science and Technology and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, as well as the secretariat and the global mechanism, are each requested to prepare four-year strategic workplans, which are complemented by two-year operational work programmes. In addition, the secretariat and the global mechanism have been requested to prepare two-year joint work programmes. Furthermore, the workplans and programmes are requested to follow a results-based management approach.

Early stage of implementation

12. In order to operationalize the strategy, the Executive Secretary implemented a number of actions, as directed by the Conference of the Parties. He undertook a corporate review of the secretariat and, in collaboration with the global mechanism, prepared a joint work programme in line with the strategy. As directed by the Conference of the Parties, the Executive Secretary organized policy dialogue on the strategy to foster awareness of and buy-in to the strategy among relevant policy decision makers. The Executive Secretary further initiated partnership agreements with relevant stakeholders within the United Nations system, starting with the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the Convention secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Corporate review process of the secretariat

13. In line with the strategy, the secretariat started the preparation of its draft multi-year strategic workplan and a costed biennial work programme, following a results-based management approach, in October 2007. Key elements of this process

have included secretariat-wide consultations and training and the adoption of a new organizational structure.

14. The documentary outputs of this process are the draft four-year strategic plan, which embodies the policy orientation of the secretariat, and the draft two-year operational plan, which presents in more detail the work of the secretariat. With regard to policy orientation, the secretariat seeks to enhance its responsiveness to needs of the parties. This will come about first and foremost through enhanced substantive services to the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies. The secretariat will upgrade its analytical and knowledge-brokering functions. It will encourage coalition-building and system-wide cooperation to deliver the objectives of the strategy and enhance political support at all levels. It will further facilitate the treatment of emerging issues, new mechanisms and legislative tools to support sustainable land management.

15. To demonstrate the new orientation, below are examples of key issues and areas that the secretariat will pursue in the coming years:

(a) Raising the profile of land and land-based ecosystem services, notably in drylands, in the context of adaptation to and mitigation of climate change;

(b) Increasing the importance of Committee on Science and Technology as a forum for scientific exchanges relating to land and soil conservation;

(c) Establishment of a baseline for desertification monitoring;

(d) Promotion of synergies, notably through the establishment of a United Nations system inter-agency cooperation network for land and soil;

(e) Development and implementation of the comprehensive Convention communication strategy;

(f) Assistance to affected country parties through advocacy and consultative processes.

16. At the extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties in November 2007, at United Nations Headquarters, the Executive Secretary was authorized to realign, as needed, the programmes and staffing structure of the secretariat in order to facilitate the implementation of the strategy. Accordingly, four substantive units have been established, for knowledge management, science and technology; awareness-raising, communication and education; policy advocacy and global issues; and the facilitation of coordination and monitoring of implementation. These substantive units are coordinated by the executive direction and management unit and are supported by conference and administrative services.

17. As next steps in the secretariat's corporate review, the four-year and two-year documents will be submitted for the consideration of parties at the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, in November 2008. After that session, following the adjustment of the draft plans of the secretariat to respond to the comments made by parties, a desk-to-desk workload analysis will be carried out. This analysis is based on a recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit, and it will be instrumental in ensuring that the structure of the secretariat and the allocation of tasks to each staff member enable the provision of its services in the most effective manner.

18. At the beginning of 2009, the secretariat will start the drafting of a results-based budget framework for 2010-2011, in accordance with United Nations standards, for submission to the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, in autumn 2009. This will complete the preparations for the move to a results-based management system.

Joint work programme between the global mechanism and the secretariat

19. In line with the strategy, the secretariat and the global mechanism have prepared a draft joint work programme, with the aim of ensuring consistency and complementarity in the delivery of services and strengthening coordination and cooperation from headquarters to the country level.

20. Since October 2007, several meetings have been held between the management of the global mechanism and the secretariat, in which the orientation and main features of collaboration were discussed. These management-level consultations provided the basis and guidance for the work of a joint global mechanism-secretariat task force, which was established in November 2007 with the purpose of supporting and coordinating the preparation of the joint work programme.

21. The draft 2008-2009 joint work programme has now been completed and will be submitted to the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. It complements the individual work programmes of the global mechanism and the secretariat. Its focus is on undertaking joint activities that support parties in advancing the implementation of the strategy, including collaboration in the development of new reporting guidelines and consideration of mechanisms for regional coordination, and improved cooperation between the global mechanism and the secretariat.

High-level policy dialogue

22. The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, in its decision 3/COP.8 adopting the ten-year strategic plan, called on the Executive Secretary "to consider engaging in policy dialogue on the strategy to foster awareness of and buy-in to the strategy among relevant policy decision makers, making use, inter alia, of the opportunities provided by the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development" (para. 22). Heeding the call, the Convention secretariat, in cooperation with the Government of Germany, organized in Bonn the high-level policy dialogue under the theme "Coping with today's global challenges in the context of the strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification", under the chairmanship of Karin Kortmann, Parliamentary State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

23. Attended by over 100 ministers, ambassadors and heads of delegations from various regions, as well as representatives of United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, the meeting identified conditions required and political commitment necessary for the implementation of the strategy in the context of emerging global challenges, including the linkages between desertification/land degradation and the adaptation to and mitigation of climate change; the need for robust investments in sustainable land management in the drylands; and the need to promote knowledge management, science and technology for enhanced implementation of the Convention.

24. Participants in the high-level policy dialogue noted that far-reaching environmental change was indisputable and that the related loss of ecosystem services had a direct impact on human well-being, development and security. They agreed to consider the looming threat of natural-resource scarcity in the emerging global context of climate change, reduced access to water and food shortages, and underlined the urgency of the situation, greater today than ever before. The meeting expressed concern over increased food prices, which could undermine the progress achieved towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals, before noting that most countries facing or at risk of facing a food crisis today were those facing land degradation problems.

25. In view of this situation where climate change could affect the drylands most, with an expected 30 per cent decline in rainfall, participants in the dialogue concluded that securing the productivity of drylands and the rehabilitation of degraded land and enhancing tenure regimes, as requested under the Convention, were indispensable parts of the toolbox for preventing future structural food crises. They agreed that the Convention must play its part in securing some essential conditions for rural development, agricultural productivity and food security while bringing about measures for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change for the benefit of the land.

26. The meeting was divided into three segments: on policy development, on mobilizing for a forward-looking strategy and on the parties' views on responses to emerging challenges.

27. Regarding policy development, participants reviewed various challenges and noted the importance of the implementation of the Convention in addressing them, particularly those related to climate change, land degradation and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals; the protection and preservation of biodiversity, forests and land degradation; water and food security and rural development; and human rights and gender. They noted that the Convention has adjusted to meet the challenge of bringing the focus of the global community to the land and that, under current reforms, the establishment of baselines and indicators through the Committee on Science and Technology and the benefits of assessment and lessons learned through the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, services are expected to be better delivered to parties. In this respect, the role of the secretariat in strengthening dialogue and consultation at the global and regional levels was recognized.

28. With respect to the dialogue on mobilizing for a forward-looking strategy, participants underlined the role played by the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties in securing a consensus among all parties on the strategy and, emphasizing more synergistic action, global benefits and coalition-building, endorsed the Convention reform agenda. They recognized that such an agenda did not belong to the States only but must involve civil society and, moreover, mobilize private/public partnerships. They invited GEF to simplify its procedures and respond specifically to the strategy through robust funding to address land degradation and proposed to focus on the potential of the vast space of the drylands to host sites for a second generation of agro-fuel production with the help of new technologies. The dialogue underlined the fact that sustainable agriculture in this context must be promoted through best practices and new conservation-oriented technologies, including mitigation through carbon sequestration and adaptation.

29. The third segment discussed the role of the Convention in addressing emerging challenges. Participants deemed that critical action must be taken on consensus-building to reorient the Convention on the path of concrete action benefiting affected countries and linked to the generation of global benefits. The high-level policy dialogue spelled out policy orientation with a view to giving impetus to the thematic and substantive discussions at the seventh session of the Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention and assisting in shaping the agenda of the discussions at the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties when considering the priority fields of application of the strategy.

Partnership agreements

30. Since its inception, the Convention has been built on the basis of partnerships. The ten-year strategic plan confirmed that policy choice through its fourth strategic objective, which is to mobilize resources to support the implementation of the Convention by building effective partnerships between national and international actors. In this respect, and at this early stage of the implementation of the strategy, the secretariat of the Convention and that of the ECA concluded a memorandum of understanding on several areas of cooperation. The memorandum of understanding was signed in Addis Ababa on 7 March 2008 by Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of ECA and Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

31. The two authorities agreed to cooperate in integrating the objectives of the Convention and the ten-year strategic plan to enhance implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) into relevant African regional activities and processes and to further involve African ministers of finance, planning and economic development in mainstreaming issues of land degradation, desertification and drought in national sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction strategy papers as well as in assessing the cost of action versus the cost of inaction in addressing those issues.

32. The Executive Secretaries also agreed to develop approaches to promote and facilitate the integration of desertification, drought and land degradation concerns into existing sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and programmes, making use, as appropriate, of relevant tools and guidelines developed under the Convention. Under the memorandum of understanding, both secretariats agreed to assess the emerging issues related to the interface between desertification/land degradation and adaptation, mitigation and enhancing resilience to climate change and ensuring that in the context of climate change, the Convention serves as a platform for addressing adaptation, mitigation and strengthening the resilience of African countries in withstanding adverse impacts of climate change. It was also agreed to assist parties in jointly undertaking regional and subregional responses to the goals and mandates of the Convention. It was further agreed to facilitate regional and subregional cooperation to assist African parties in improving institutional, scientific and human capacity for the effective implementation of the Convention and to assist in the preparation and implementation of programmes in the context of cooperation within Africa, at the subregional and national levels. The secretariat of the Convention is also exploring the possibility of entering into partnership with the Africa Centre for Climate Change, which is hosted by ECA.

3. Synergies between the three Rio Conventions

33. The governing bodies of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, as well as the General Assembly, have been consistently calling for cooperation among the three Rio Conventions in order to promote complementarities in the work of the secretariats and related processes. Over the past few years, there has been increased awareness that in order to address current global challenges, more synergies are needed among the Rio Conventions, given the intricate interrelationships among climate change, biological diversity, land degradation, drought and desertification.

34. The recent millennium ecosystem assessment observed that drought and desertification caused degradation to ecosystems, affected sustainable livelihoods of vulnerable populations and tended to reduce their capacity for resilience. Desertification and drought account for most of the biodiversity loss in dry and subhumid ecosystems, and such losses can possibly lead to the extinction of otherwise resistant and resilient species that until now have survived and adapted to previous processes of climate change.

35. Coordinated and collaborative action has already been taken at the level of the secretariats and at the level of countries. The policy objective is to utilize the ecosystem approach and services provided by the secretariats in the planning and implementation of policies, plans and programmes that address the provisions of all three Conventions. The three secretariats have been implementing, according to their mandates, several coordinated actions aimed at the delivery of the joint strategic objectives of raising public awareness, creation of capacities, contribution to the improvement of the global environment and fostering strong scientific backing for sustainable policies derived from the implementation of the Conventions. Concrete steps have been taken to strengthen the collaboration among the three secretariats, in forms such as periodic statements by the Executive Secretaries articulating the common issues of the three Conventions; joint exhibitions at their Conferences of the Parties; joint publications on forests and on adaptation; and the identification of new and additional opportunities for inter-agency collaboration. In the near future, the development and operation of a common web page is envisaged. At the national level, the three Conventions have much to gain from a synergistic implementation of their programming and reporting tools, for instance, by tapping into the synergy between the national action programmes of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the national adaptation programmes of action of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

36. With respect to the collaboration between the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Biological Diversity, their secretariats are moving forward on strategies for implementation of the decision on dryland biodiversity adopted during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties, held in Bonn, Germany, in May 2008, based on the guidelines provided by the ten-year strategic plan and the outcomes of that ninth session. The actions to be undertaken to implement that decision could jointly address defined common thematic implementation areas and other challenging areas envisaged in the decision, according to their respective mandates and programmes of work.

4. Outcome of the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development as it relates to the Convention

37. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development was held in New York from 5 to 16 May 2008, with the participation of a number of ministers from Member States at a high-level segment. The session reviewed six themes on its agenda, namely, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. It identified obstacles and constraints, lessons learned and best practices, means of implementation, interlinkages and all cross-cutting issues, as well as challenges. All six topics were relevant to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Three of them, land, drought and desertification, were at its core.

38. Under the land theme, the Commission focused on sustainable land management, including ecosystem functions that land provides, as well as land use and tenures. For drought, the high-level segment advocated for a proactive and risk-based approach in its management; technology; adapted crop patterns; know-how sharing; public awareness; early warning systems; and access to accurate and timely climatic and meteorological information. With respect to desertification, the ministers attending the session supported the full implementation and adequate funding of the Convention. Equally important was the recognition by the ministers that the Convention was the only legally binding agreement on land issues that systematically addresses land degradation and desertification. This constitutes an important step in the process leading to the secretariat's expected accomplishment under the strategy whose performance indicator will be the decision by the Conference of Parties that the Convention is a legal reference for global soil protection. Earlier on in the session, the Commission had established the need to scale up the allocation of financial resources to the GEF focal area on land degradation in the next replenishment cycle.

39. Several side events took place during the session. The Convention secretariat, in collaboration with key partners, organized three major side events. The first of these was organized in collaboration with the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction on the theme "Building partnerships to reduce risk of drought and desertification", the objective of which was to draw international attention to the devastating impacts, particularly in Africa, of drought and desertification, where prolonged drought can have dire effects involving millions of people.

40. The second side event was organized on the theme "The right to food and water implies the duty to conserve the land", in collaboration with the office of the former Special Rapporteur on the right to food and the Italian Government. Against the backdrop of rising food prices, food scarcity and the focus of the sixteenth session on, inter alia, agriculture, this side event attracted considerable attention. It served to highlight that, at a time when the international community was facing rising food prices, food riots and decreasing availability of new arable land to meet the needs of growing populations, the time had come to recognize the urgent need to reverse land degradation and reclaim degraded and desertified land. Participants called for a renewed international commitment to create the necessary conducive environment, including by according high priority to investment in sustainable land management and reversing land degradation, which would go a long way towards

ensuring the realization of the right to food and water, integral elements of the right to development.

41. The third side event was organized with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers and the International Council for Science on the theme "Enhancing the economic value of dryland areas through sustainable agricultural practices: an efficient way to fight desertification". The side event highlighted the concerns of rural communities and farmers in arid and semi-arid areas and flagged the central role that they play in the fight against desertification, not only because they are the most vulnerable, but, more importantly, because farmers are agents of change and part of the solution. A large number of delegations participated in the interactive discussions that followed each of the side events, which served to enhance awareness about the Convention and land degradation/desertification issues.

5. Observance of 2008 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

42. In its resolution 49/115, the General Assembly proclaimed 17 June World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought. It invited all States to devote the World Day to promoting public awareness to combat desertification and the effects of drought and the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

43. The theme of the World Day in 2008 was "Combating land degradation for sustainable agriculture", selected in the light of the sixteenth and seventeenth sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which focused on the issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. The high visibility of the theme was also due in part to the prevailing concern among the international community about food security.

44. The 2008 observance marked the first major opportunity to implement the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018) in the areas of advocacy, awareness-raising and education, which constitute one of the five operational objectives of the strategy. Parties to the Convention, non-governmental organizations and international agencies were encouraged to observe the World Day by organizing various awareness-raising activities. Subsequently, a number of them reported on their events and activities, which were introduced through a special page on the Convention website for the World Day observance. In general, those reports indicated strong interest among various stakeholders in the linkages between land degradation and sustainable agriculture. The activities also helped raise public awareness on issues surrounding desertification, land degradation and drought at the local and national levels. A variety of awareness-raising activities at the United Nations campus in Bonn, Germany, including exhibitions and film viewings, came about through inter-agency cooperation.

45. On the occasion of the World Day observance, a special message was issued by the Secretary-General. It stated that the Convention, serving as the nexus between poverty reduction and ecosystem protection in the drylands, constituted the sole international legal framework to reclaim dry and degraded land and that it could offer a long-term solution for producing more food for more people, while such unused lands could also serve for biofuel production and thus offer new benefits. The Executive Secretary of the Convention also published a special

message underlining that the Convention had a role in sustainable agriculture by improving the livelihoods of affected populations and ecosystems.

6. Status of preparation of the next Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies

46. By its decision 28/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties decided that its ninth session would be held in Bonn, Germany, the site of the Convention secretariat in autumn 2009, in the event that no party made an offer to host that session and meet the additional costs. The Conference of the Parties invited the Executive Secretary to accommodate, in consultation with its Bureau, any offer from a party to host the ninth session.

47. Pursuant to that decision, the secretariat of the Convention received a written notification from the office of the national focal point of Brazil for the Convention, informing it of the interest of his country in hosting the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties. Since then, additional exchanges have taken place and a meeting was organized on the sidelines of the high-level policy dialogue, in Bonn on 28 May, to follow up on the specifics of that generous offer. The secretariat is expected to receive soon from the Government of Brazil a formal notification in this respect, through the established channels, in order to allow for the launching of the formal consultation process.

48. With regard to the meetings of the subsidiary bodies, the Assembly, in its resolution 62/193, had already welcomed the offer made by the Government of Turkey to host the seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention in conjunction with the special intersessional session of the Committee on Science and Technology, to be held in November 2008 in Istanbul.

49. Further to consultations with the Government of Turkey, final dates for the session have been agreed upon. The meeting will be held in Istanbul from 3 to 14 November 2008. Turkey has already established a national coordination committee to deal with all organizational arrangements related to both gatherings. A host country agreement between the Convention secretariat and the Government of Turkey is to be signed in coming months.

III. Observations and recommendations

50. **The implementation of resolution 62/193 took place in an international context marked by several crises and challenges that could be addressed through effective implementation of the Convention. The sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development also provided an intergovernmental tribune to review main issues at the core of the Convention and to prepare for the policy decisions on those topics. The high-level policy dialogue contributed to rallying support for the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and to positioning the Convention as one of the strategic responses to current global challenges and crises. In this respect, the Assembly may wish to underline the importance of the Convention when addressing climate change concerns. Accordingly, the Assembly may wish to envisage that the post-Kyoto arrangement duly takes into account the potential of land not only as a carbon storage reservoir, and also that the sustainable management of**

land contributes to adaptation to climate change, the mitigation of its effects and the strengthening of the resilience of affected developing countries. Further, the Assembly could advocate for the Convention as a long-term instrument that the international community could use to produce more food for more people by reclaiming dry and degraded land, thus offering new opportunities for impoverished populations living in such areas.

51. **The Assembly may also wish to call on the international community to lend full support to the ten-year strategic plan and to prioritize investment in land and sustainable land management, which are necessary to prevent and reverse land degradation and desertification and thus contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Given the importance of land, which constitutes a cross-sectoral issue, the Assembly may wish to invite United Nations agencies to form a coalition in the framework of the Convention to support an effective response to land degradation, led by the vision and objectives of the strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties last year in Madrid.**

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/194, the General Assembly invited the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity to report on the work of the Conference of the Parties. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Overview of major developments

1. Outcome of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Summary

2. The ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity was held in Bonn, Germany, from 19 to 30 May 2008, with over 5,000 participants representing 191 parties and their partners. Some 240 side events were organized, including 82 by the representatives of the business community. A total of 864 journalists attended, and the meeting was webcast live for the first time. Recordings of the webcasts will be available for viewing until December 2008 through the website of the secretariat (www.cbd.int).

3. The high-level segment of the meeting was held from 28 to 30 May 2008, with a record participation of 117 ministers and vice-ministers. It was inaugurated by the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, and closed by the President of Germany, Horst Köhler. For the first time, a component for Heads of State or Government was convened, with the participation of the Prime Minister of Canada, the President of Palau, the President of the European Commission and the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was delivered to the participants, and the Deputy Secretary-General sent a special message to the first-ever meeting of the network of women environment ministers, also a first, held on 28 May 2008.

4. The Federal Chancellor of Germany announced a contribution of €500 million for biodiversity for the period 2009-2012.

5. "The green wave", a multi-year biodiversity education campaign aimed at children and youth, was launched in partnership with the host country on 22 May, the International Day for Biological Diversity. The initiative is intended to engage schoolchildren and youth in the global biodiversity agenda and will include coordinated tree-planting events in or near schoolyards throughout the world on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity.

6. For the first time, a meeting on cities and biodiversity was convened, in Erfurt, Germany, from 21 to 26 May 2008, in conjunction with a meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Some 150 representatives attended the event on the theme "Local action for biodiversity" and 250 participants attended the event on "Urban biodiversity and design: implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in towns and cities". The results were submitted to and discussed at the high-level

segment. As a result, the parties adopted, for the first time, a decision on cities and biodiversity with a view to preparing a work programme to be adopted in 2010.

7. A meeting on the theme "Parliamentarians and biodiversity" was convened on 27 May in collaboration with the German Bundestag Committee on Nature Conservation, and an initiative to involve parliamentarians in the conservation of biodiversity was launched in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Global Legislators for Environment. An initiative on biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation was also launched, in collaboration with Germany and France.

8. The Convention on Biological Diversity moved closer to universal participation, as Brunei Darussalam, one the most biodiversity-rich countries in the world, became its 191st party and participated in the meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Iraq also announced that it was in the process of completing its accession procedures.

2. Overview of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties

9. Thirty-five decisions were adopted, aimed at initiating a new era of enhanced commitment to and implementation of the Convention, meeting the 2010 target of reducing biodiversity loss and furthering the fulfilment of the three objectives of the Convention by agreeing on a number of measures that support conservation measures, ways to ensure sustainable use and a set of rules to ensure that benefits from the use of genetic resources are shared equitably. The key elements of some of those decisions of immediate relevance to the General Assembly are highlighted below.

10. A major breakthrough was the agreement on a firm process towards the finalization at the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their use. The meeting produced a plan for the negotiations that sets out not only a clear road map leading to 2010, but also the nature, scope and means of implementation of the regime.

11. Countries also agreed to move towards the development of a global network of protected areas that would ensure the conservation of biodiversity. Delegates agreed to a framework of research, identification and financing that would allow the existing protected areas on land and sea not only to expand, but also to cover all the most significant ecosystems of the world. Among the outcomes of the meeting was the establishment of a major financing mechanism for protected areas. The Life Web initiative, proposed by Germany in collaboration with the Convention, will provide significant resources to ensure the implementation of the programme of work on protected areas around the world. The purpose of the initiative is to match voluntary commitments for the designation of new protected areas and improved management of existing areas with commitments for the dedicated financing of those areas. Germany announced an initial contribution of €40 million. More than 60 parties have committed themselves to supporting the initiative either financially or by extending protected-area coverage. The network of protected areas is one of the central instruments for halting the dramatic global loss of species and habitats and for providing a solid basis for the conservation of natural resources. Intact habitats such as forests, wetlands and coral reefs are also important sinks for greenhouse gases and play a fundamental role in the natural regulation of the climate.

12. On the issue of biofuels, which was considered against the backdrop of a global food crisis triggered by rising commodity prices, while parties agreed that the sustainable production and use of biofuels could have many positive contributions, its success depended on the methods of production, the feedstocks and the agricultural practices involved. They therefore called for the development of sound policy frameworks on biofuels, drawing upon the existing tools under the Convention (decision IX/2).

13. In recognition of the important role of women as stakeholders in the process of biodiversity conservation, a Gender Plan of Action (UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/12/Rev.1) was adopted — the first by any multilateral environmental agreement (decision IX/24).

14. The parties acknowledged the importance of South-South cooperation in promoting biodiversity conservation and sustainable use and adopted a decision on a multi-year programme of work on South-South cooperation to be prepared in partnership with the Group of 77 and China (decision IX/25).

15. As a contribution to ongoing important processes in the United Nations, the parties adopted a message on biological diversity and finance to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (decision IX/11 C, annex).

16. At the Bonn meeting, for the first time, a decision on cities and biodiversity was adopted, with a view to preparing a work programme to be adopted in 2010.

17. The parties also adopted a comprehensive decision on measures to mark the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, including a draft resolution for the consideration of the General Assembly (decision IX/33, annex). Among other things, they recommended the convening of a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, which would coincide with the observance of the International Year of Biodiversity proclaimed by the Assembly.

18. The International Day for Biological Diversity was observed during the meeting of the Conference of the Parties on 22 May with a special focus on agricultural biodiversity. Agricultural biodiversity was also one of the themes for in-depth review by the parties at the meeting.

19. A number of other major issues were considered, including how to tackle the problem of invasive alien species, loss of rainforest biodiversity, degradation of marine ecosystems and genetically modified trees.

20. The parties welcomed emerging efforts towards reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as a potential way to reduce the current rate of loss of forest biodiversity. They called on parties, other Governments and international organizations to ensure that efforts to reduce such emissions do not run counter to the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity, but support the implementation of its relevant provisions, including with respect to the rights of indigenous and local communities.

21. The parties also adopted decisions recognizing and strengthening the links between the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. They also called for additional technical and scientific work on the links between biodiversity and climate change mitigation and

adaptation, including through the convening of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change.

22. The meeting of the Conference of the Parties was also notable for the enhanced synergies among the three Rio Conventions, including through the active participation of the Executive Secretaries of the other two Rio Conventions, joint staff meetings and the hosting of a joint information kiosk aimed at enhancing awareness of relevant activities. The sixth meeting of the Biodiversity Liaison Group and the second meeting of the chairs of the scientific bodies of the biodiversity-related conventions were also convened in conjunction with the meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

23. The Parties welcomed the offer of the city of Nagoya, Japan, to host the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2010 and to convene from 27 to 29 October 2010 a high-level segment with the participation of Heads of State or Government.

3. Outcome of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

24. The fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety was held in Bonn, Germany, from 12 to 16 May 2008, with more than 2,000 participants representing 143 parties and their partners. The meeting adopted 18 decisions aimed at strengthening implementation and compliance and completing the institutional legal architecture envisaged in the Protocol.

25. A major breakthrough at the meeting, following four years of intensive negotiations, was the agreement by the participants to work on elaborating legally binding rules and procedures for liability and redress in the event of damage that could be caused by the transboundary movements of living modified organisms, commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms, thereby fulfilling a legally binding requirement of the Protocol. The Parties agreed to a timetable and a framework for the negotiation of rules and procedures, which will be discussed at two intersessional meetings so that the liability and redress instrument can be finalized in time for the next meeting of the parties, in Nagoya, Japan, in 2010.

26. The issues of capacity-building, risk assessment and risk management, information-sharing and improved access to and use of the Biosafety Clearing House, which are central to the effective implementation of the Protocol, were also addressed. The parties decided to establish an ad hoc technical group on risk assessment and risk management and an open-ended online forum through the Biosafety Clearing House to address, inter alia, the need for further guidance on specific aspects of risk assessment. There was agreement on funding capacity-building initiatives and on a revised set of indicators for monitoring the updated Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the Protocol. Measures to further strengthen and improve ease of access to the Biosafety Clearing House were also adopted. While the new outreach strategy for the Protocol was widely appreciated, it was also decided to develop a programme of work on public awareness, education and participation on the issue of the safe transfer and handling of living modified organisms. On the issue of modalities for developing standards for handling, transport, packaging and identification, the parties decided

to implement the detailed requirements that had been adopted at their previous meeting and review their implementation at their sixth meeting.

III. Recommendations

27. **The General Assembly may, at its sixty-third session, wish to:**

(a) **Welcome the outcomes of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;**

(b) **Express its deep appreciation to the Government of Germany for successfully hosting the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;**

(c) **Express its deep appreciation to the Government of Japan for its offer to host, in 2010, the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and its fifth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;**

(d) **Endorse the draft resolution submitted by the Conference of the Parties (decision IX/33, annex) and convene a special high-level event on the eve of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, with the participation of Heads of State or Government, to mark the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 and renew their commitment to reducing biodiversity loss;**

(e) **Call on all United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions to fully support and participate in the activities being envisaged for the observance of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, under the auspices of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity;**

(f) **Call on all major organs of the United Nations, including functional commissions, as well as all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions, to consider a special event or special focus on the linkages between biodiversity, poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in their major meetings in 2010;**

(g) **Invite the Secretary-General, in accordance with established practice, to designate honorary representatives for the International Year of Biodiversity in order to generate awareness of the importance of biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation and achieving the Millennium Development Goals;**

(h) **Urge all Member States to observe the International Year of Biodiversity and establish, as soon as possible, national committees with the active participation of the focal points of the three Rio Conventions;**

(i) **Call on donors to finance the implementation of decisions adopted at the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and at its fourth meeting serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol;**

(j) **Welcome the adoption of a South-South initiative for achieving the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention;**

(k) Welcome the adoption of the Cities and Biodiversity initiative;

(l) Welcome the adoption of a Gender Plan of Action and call on donors to provide financial assistance for the implementation of its recommendations;

(m) Urge States that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Convention and thereby make participation universal;

(n) Urge Parties to the Convention that have not yet done so to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol as soon as possible.

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Item 68 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Humanitarian assistance and reconstruction of Liberia

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the General Assembly in compliance with its request in resolution 61/218. It provides a status report and an analysis of the current challenges to the delivery of both humanitarian relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to Liberia.

* A/63/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/218. It provides a status report and an analysis of the current challenges to the delivery of both humanitarian relief and rehabilitation assistance by the United Nations and its partners to Liberia. In particular, it looks at progress made in providing an environment conducive to the promotion of peace, socio-economic development and regional security; financial and technical assistance; and support for the return and reintegration of ex-combatants.

II. Review of major developments

2. The presence of peacekeeping troops associated with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has stabilized the security situation in all 15 counties of Liberia, creating an environment conducive to the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin, supporting the re-establishment of a democratic government and resuscitating the economy. On the basis of an analysis by the United Nations of the current post-conflict situation and the need to bolster the hard-won peace with concrete and rapid supportive interventions, in October 2007 the Secretary-General deemed Liberia eligible to receive funding under the second window of the Peacebuilding Fund. The Peacebuilding Support Office subsequently submitted a priority plan highlighting three key peacebuilding focus areas, namely, fostering national reconciliation and managing conflict, addressing the needs of war-affected youth and former combatants and strengthening State capacity for peace consolidation. The priority plan has been endorsed for funding in the amount of $15 million.

3. By the end of December 2007, 103,019 ex-combatants had been disarmed and 101,000 demobilized under the demobilization, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration programme. Subsequently, the focus shifted towards reintegration and rehabilitation with vocational skills training, formal education, apprenticeships and job placement. A total of 99,000 ex-combatants became eligible for reintegration assistance, of which 90,000 benefited from various reintegration programmes. Their full and sustainable reintegration remains to be completed and is part of the larger challenge of alleviating poverty in Liberia by increasing access to social services and economic opportunity. By January 2008, the final phase of reintegration assistance for the residual caseload of beneficiaries was launched. The overarching goal is to provide reintegration support to the remaining 9,000 ex-combatants who did not receive assistance in the earlier programme and who are still in need of assistance. By providing reintegration support, the programme aims to increase the possibility of employment in the market, which is expected to contribute to national development and reconciliation in Liberia and diminish the risk of threats to the relative peace and stability of the country.

A. Humanitarian assistance

4. In 2007 there were more than 10 reported cases of flooding in five counties. In the same period, strong winds damaged 44 homes and other structures in two

counties. Fire destroyed 43 homes in two villages in two counties. Overall, more than 21,000 people were affected. While the destruction associated with those events is not on the same scale as that caused by recent natural disasters in other parts of the world, limited financial support for critical humanitarian needs, poor response and inadequate absorptive capacity had an extraordinarily negative impact on affected communities in Liberia.

5. The National Disaster Relief Commission is working with partners to develop a comprehensive national disaster management policy. A capacity assessment has been undertaken, and a number of workshops and consultations have commenced with a view to generating an understanding of and support for disaster risk reduction policies and developing a risk reduction and response framework. Other initiatives to ensure short-term integrated disaster contingency plans are also under development.

6. Despite the natural disasters, the overall humanitarian situation in Liberia has continued to improve since the issuance of the previous report (A/61/209). The Government of Liberia, with the assistance of the United Nations and the entire humanitarian community, maintained the focus on urgent humanitarian needs while at the same time engaging in efforts to ensure that Liberians enjoy the benefits of development in an atmosphere of peace and stability. A common humanitarian action plan was launched in 2007 to foster greater complementarity with the interim poverty reduction strategy. A total of $117 million in funding was solicited to address key humanitarian needs, including basic health care, water and sanitation facilities and food security.

7. In expectation of a new poverty reduction strategy for the period 2008-2011, a more limited appeal was launched in 2008 to mobilize funds for the most critical residual gaps in the three priority sectors of health care, water and sanitation and food security. Funding for humanitarian assistance has been greatly reduced in the light of the progress made in development. Nevertheless, morbidity and mortality remain high. In this regard, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ranks the under-five mortality rate in Liberia as the fifth highest in the world. Access to vulnerable and isolated populations, particularly during the long rainy season, remains a critical challenge. Access to basic health services, education and road infrastructure were all identified as top priorities in the recent country-wide development agenda consultations that were undertaken as part of the poverty reduction strategy development process.

8. In addition, funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund enabled United Nations agencies and partners to provide urgent life-saving assistance to over 1 million vulnerable people across Liberia, especially in underserved communities, including mass vaccinations, safe drinking water and improved hygiene and sanitation facilities. An outbreak of yellow fever was tackled with a high degree of effective collaboration between the Government of Liberia and the United Nations.

9. The process of return of internally displaced persons has been highly successful owing to the improved security situation in the country over recent years. The official assisted return process lasted from November 2004 to April 2006, when the Vice-President of Liberia declared it to be completed. During that period, more than 314,000 internally displaced persons were returned to their places of origin.

10. In addition, there are ongoing efforts to repatriate Liberian refugees in the subregion. The official repatriation programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) ran from October 2004 to December 2007 and supported the return of 112,256 refugees. An additional 45,499 refugees returned by their own means during that period. In April 2008, another voluntary return exercise was launched following a tripartite agreement between Ghana, Liberia and UNHCR, primarily for the return of the 27,000 refugees remaining in Ghana by the end of 2008.

11. Although the capacity to absorb returnees has improved since 2006, many internally displaced persons and refugees are returning home amid high unemployment and rising food and fuel prices. The Government of Liberia and the United Nations are exploring ways of helping returnees to resettle and to reintegrate into their former communities. These include providing support for growing food, training in income-generating activities and education. An estimated 72,000 registered Liberian refugees remain in asylum countries.

12. The legacy of rape and other forms of sexual violence that were so pervasive during the 18 years of conflict continue to be felt today, with rape remaining the most frequently committed serious crime in post-conflict Liberia. Along with its impact on the human rights of those affected, sexual violence poses a serious obstacle to the consolidation of peace and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and needs urgently to be addressed. Indeed, the prevalence of gender-based violence has serious repercussions, including exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned or unwanted pregnancy and the abandonment of victims by their husbands, partners and families, which, in turn, makes them increasingly vulnerable to further violence. Survivors are often unwilling to seek medical or psychosocial assistance or to report assaults to police because of the stigma associated with rape. Health facilities are ill equipped, lack adequate drugs and medical supplies and have an insufficient number of health professionals trained in the clinical and psychological management of victims. The weak judicial system and the lack of awareness and understanding of the legal system among the populace undermine the implementation of the national rape law. Moreover, owing to the culture of impunity that allows perpetrators of gender-based violence to go unpunished, victims are usually hesitant to seek assistance or to report such crimes.

13. Against this backdrop, a nationwide campaign against rape and the signing in June 2008 of the joint Government of Liberia/United Nations programme to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, to be implemented over a four-year period, are important developments. During the first phase of the programme, from 2008 to 2010, support will target the following areas: psychosocial support, health care, legal redress, security and protection, and coordination, with an aggregate cost of $13,230,000. The key United Nations partners in this programme are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund, UNHCR, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the World Health Organization and UNMIL. The effective implementation of the programme will be critical in improving efforts to respond to and prevent sexual violence, including combating the impunity on which it thrives. Adequate and sustained funding from donors will be essential to its success.

14. In July 2008, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity, in coordination with the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative, a coalition of 12 United Nations entities, deployed a senior gender and gender-based violence adviser to initiate the joint programme and act as programme manager. The Gender Capacity Adviser is part of the Ministry of Gender and Development, which coordinates the programme with the support of Government line ministries and implementing partners. A joint programme steering committee has been formed. The development of effective coordination systems and structures and programme quality assurance mechanisms will be prioritized during the initial phase, from July to December 2008.

B. Transitional and recovery issues

15. The rule of law and corruption have been particularly pertinent issues. The Liberian Police Academy was re-established in July 2004 to train the country's new police force. To date, 3,500 new Liberian National Police (including 180 recruits of the newly formed Emergency Response Unit), 155 Liberia Seaport Police and 392 Special Security Service officers have graduated from the Academy. Security sector reform has been under way since before the inauguration of the Government on 16 January 2006. However, active recruitment of the new Liberian army began after the inauguration.

16. As reconciliation is a precondition for sustainable peace, legislation establishing a truth and reconciliation commission was passed in June 2005. Work began in earnest after the inauguration of the nine commissioners in February 2006, with the official launch taking place in June 2006. This was followed by a massive public awareness campaign and statement-taking process in the 15 counties of Liberia. The public hearings started in January 2008 and are continuing, with at least one diaspora hearing having taken place in the United States of America, in June 2008. The hearings are currently ongoing in the following thematic areas: youth, children, women and the review of the historical past of Liberia. The mandate of the commission ends at the end of 2008, but a request has been submitted for an extension.

17. The National Transitional Government of Liberia came to an end following elections in 2005 and the inauguration of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the first democratically elected woman president in Africa, in January 2006. Her administration has registered significant results in consolidating peace and security, restoring governance and the rule of law, rehabilitating infrastructure and providing basic social services, with the primary planning frameworks being the 150-day action plan, the interim poverty reduction strategy and currently the poverty reduction strategy.

18. After protracted negotiations with international partners, the National Transitional Government committed itself to the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme in September 2005. The Programme addresses revenue collection and stresses capacity-building and national ownership of the reform agenda. The United Nations is part of a technical team that helps to coordinate the implementation of the Programme by international partners and supports organization, monitoring and assessment, ensuring consultation with civil society and planning with the technical team and the Economic Governance Steering

Committee. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from Government, the international community and civil society, and it oversees the implementation of the Programme. As a result of the initiative, the Government is benefiting from the services of internationally recruited experts in strategic economic institutions to enhance transparency and facilitate the transfer of skills. An independent evaluation of the Programme has been undertaken, the results of which are expected to be used in formulating the Programmes' exit strategy.

19. The Government of Liberia, with support from its development partners, has finalized its first post-conflict medium-term development agenda, the "Lift Liberia" poverty reduction strategy. The strategy articulates the Government's overall vision and major development strategies for moving towards rapid, inclusive and sustainable growth and development during the period 2008-2011. The strategy, built on the lessons learned from the 150-day action plan and the interim poverty reduction strategy, includes four pillars: enhancing peace and national security, revitalizing the economy, strengthening democratic governance and the rule of law, and rehabilitating infrastructure and delivering basic services. The poverty reduction strategy will be implemented between 1 April 2008 and 30 June 2011, and has been formulated through broad-based consultations, with the participation of citizens in cities, towns and villages throughout the country, members of the business community, civil society groups, the Legislature and international development partners. With the German Government serving as host, the poverty reduction strategy was presented to partners (comprising foundations, private firms and bilateral and multilateral institutions) at the Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum, held in Berlin on 26 and 27 June 2008. The partners overwhelmingly endorsed the poverty reduction strategy and showed their firm commitment to align their programmes and funding commitments to it, with infrastructure projects, through the Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund, listed as a key funding area.

20. Liberia is also on its way to finalizing its second Millennium Development Goals report, which is based on the latest indicators from the comprehensive food security and nutrition survey, the Liberia demographic and health survey and the core welfare and indicators questionnaire. The report is expected to be published and launched in the third quarter of 2008. The communiqué from the Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum underscores the significant need to accelerate reconstruction efforts and work towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals through the poverty reduction strategy. To effectively plan, monitor and track activities related to the Millennium Development Goals, the Government, with technical assistance from UNDP, has set up a steering committee headed by the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs.

21. Inspired by the Millennium Village concept, Liberia has launched its first Millennium Village in the central region of the country, targeting 23,826 rural-dwellers in the Kokoyah District of Bong County. The project aims to integrate interventions needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals at the district level in a five-year time frame. It also provides a basis for scaling up and integrating best practices in the areas of agriculture, education, nutrition, health, energy, water and the environment. An assessment is under way to locate the second Millennium Village in the south-eastern region of Liberia, the most deprived and poorest region in the country.

22. The emphasis on community-based recovery articulated by the United Nations joint action plan, which is supported principally by UNHCR, the World Food Programme, UNDP and UNICEF, mirrors the national development agenda. All development partners engaged in community-based recovery initiatives are now working in a coordinated and cohesive manner to promote rural reconstruction and development. Key focus areas include basic socio-economic infrastructure, livelihoods, and service provision, as well as the strengthening of local governance frameworks and mechanisms.

III. Current challenges to peace consolidation and development

23. Global increases in the price of essential commodities such as food and fuel threaten to destabilize Liberia's fragile peace. With price-related uprisings having occurred in neighbouring countries, including Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, Liberia has not yet reached the point of civil unrest, but undercurrents of tension cannot be ignored.

24. As a net food importer, Liberia has not been spared the global rise in food and fuel prices. The prices of rice, fuel and other basic commodities increased by 22 per cent between January 2007 and January 2008, which led to a 14 per cent increase in the consumer price index during that period. Economists estimate that prices are likely to continue to rise. Liberia produces less than half of its main staple food (rice). Judging from Liberia's recent past, food price increases have the potential of disrupting peace and security and should be addressed within national, regional and global perspectives.

25. Several efforts have been made to address the food crisis at both the national and regional levels. A World Bank grant of $10 million to address urgent food needs in the country is a welcome initiative, as are efforts by the United Nations to support the Government's food security and nutrition strategy through a $140.2 million joint United Nations programme. Emergency funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund has also been received to support short-term food security interventions during the current planting season.

26. Governments of the Mano River Union (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire) have made proposals aimed at increasing food production and regional trade. The Government of Liberia plans to increase the minimum wages of civil servants in order to help them cope with the rise in food prices. There is now an increased national focus on improving food production as the most sustainable way of reducing the country's exposure to world rice supply and price shocks.

27. Another key development challenge in Liberia remains security. Increasing waves of armed robbery in residential as well as corporate quarters are posing a challenge to the Liberian National Police. The exorbitantly high levels of unemployment, the recent influx of returning refugees and deported nationals and the high population density in urban areas are further facilitating the escalation of crime rates. The human and logistical capacity challenges of the national police force continue to hinder any real progress towards stopping crime.

28. Despite the dedication of the Government and the progress that has been made over the past 30 months, severe institutional, material and national capacity constraints are hampering the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

This is particularly true for human resources in all sectors. With the help of UNDP, a 10-year development strategy is being developed to address human capacity development needs in the short, medium and long term. In addition, about two thirds of the population of Liberia is living below the poverty line, and when combined with the country's severely limited technical and financial capacity, significant underemployment and vast infrastructure deficit, the challenges in accelerating the reconstruction process are great.

29. The principal obstacles to the reconstruction and development process are inadequate technical capacity and lack of resources needed to drive reforms and the development agenda of the country. However, the Government has shown a high degree of political commitment to the development process. In response, its development partners have expressed their overwhelming support, as indicated by the tremendous debt waiver the country has received so far. At the recently held Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum, the partners welcomed the significant progress Liberia has made under its interim poverty reduction strategy, with key success areas including reaching the decision point, under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, qualifying for support under the International Monetary Fund Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility, creating the foundation for rebuilding the security forces, restoring services to 350 health facilities, increasing school enrolment by 44 per cent and reactivating the traditional growth sectors.

30. In support of the Paris Declaration principles on the harmonization and alignment of commitments to the priorities under the poverty reduction strategy, the partners agreed that the Government should develop a more detailed costing to facilitate the process and that a review would be done twice a year to provide input for the preparation of the national budget to ensure coordination and alignment. The partners also agreed to provide assistance to the Government in strengthening aid management. Some partners took the opportunity during the Liberia Poverty Reduction Forum to announce new financial and technical assistance commitments to Liberia. This is highly commendable; however, it must be signalled that any delays in disbursing funds would cause considerable delays in the delivery of basic services and the fulfilment of poverty reduction strategy priorities.

31. The recent development of statistical capacities and the conduct of the comprehensive food and nutrition survey, the Liberian demographic and health survey, the core welfare indicators questionnaire, the participatory poverty assessment and the national housing and population census have helped greatly to fill serious data gaps. It is critical to put in place a data and information management system that is well coordinated through a national statistical development strategy. Through the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services, the Government has developed a draft national statistical development strategy, which is being validated. Reliable and comprehensive data, including statistics and geo-information, are crucial in supporting the national reconstruction and development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, in conjunction with such United Nations tools as the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the cluster coordination framework.

32. The lack of basic social services and infrastructure is posing a severe challenge to economic recovery. Roads, where they exist at all, are in extreme need of repair, and large tracts of rural Liberia are accessible only by air during the rainy

season (April-October). There is no public power or water supply, and much of the rural population has no access to power at all.

33. Another key concern is the extremely high level of formal unemployment, estimated to be as high as 80 per cent, with youth being one of the worst-affected segments of the population. This complex situation is exacerbated by the high number of unemployed ex-combatants who have completed their reintegration training programmes and the former Armed Forces of Liberia soldiers who were discharged.

34. While the socio-economic situation in the country remains critical, regional security concerns are also widespread. Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea are not free from signs of unrest, and the security situation remains tentative in Sierra Leone as it recovers from 10 years of conflict. Contingency preparedness forms part of the plans of all United Nations agencies and many non-governmental organizations.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

35. For the Millennium Development Goals to be achieved, or at least for substantial progress to be made, massive poverty alleviation and economic recovery efforts are essential. Substantial donor support is urgently required to help the new Government to begin to provide some services on a large scale and help to meet the expectations of the people of Liberia. The consolidation of the recent hard-won peace is dependent on this. Qualified Liberians must be attracted back to serve their country. It is of the essence that resources be available on a large scale and in a timely manner.

36. Data and information management is a central pillar of macroeconomic development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in Liberia, and support for building national capacity is crucial. Reliable data and data products are essential for the development of an effective development agenda and other national mechanisms and strategies aimed at reducing poverty.

37. Building the capacity of national institutions is also fundamental. The United Nations is in the process of launching county support teams to work with 15 recently appointed county superintendents in an effort to underpin sound decentralized governance with information and project management skills. The collaboration and support of all development partners would greatly increase the effectiveness of the endeavour.

38. As emphasized in the poverty reduction strategy, creating employment through the private sector is at the heart of recovery and sustainable development in Liberia. Development partners must focus on attracting investment into the country and stabilizing the economic environment in order to foster economic growth.

39. The implementation of the joint Government of Liberia/United Nations programme to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence is essential, not only to meet the needs of those affected but also to consolidate peace and attain the Millennium Development Goals. In recognition of the gravity of such violence and the commitment of the Government to respond, development partners and donor Governments should ensure adequate and sustained funding for the programme.

40. Education and health care, particularly regarding child mortality and maternal health, have similarly been identified by the Government as areas of critical concern. The United Nations system and other development partners need to increase support in those areas if any meaningful progress is to be made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Liberia.

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Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides a comprehensive review of the continuing efforts of the United Nations system, the international community and small island developing States to operationalize the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The report also gives an account of the activities of small island developing States day during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and includes the most recent initiatives to promote the mainstreaming of the Mauritius Strategy in small island developing States' sustainable development plans.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 62/191, welcomed the renewed commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States[1] and urged Governments and all relevant international and regional organizations, United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and regional economic commissions, international financial institutions, the Global Environment Facility, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and major groups, to take timely actions to ensure the effective implementation of and follow-up to the Mauritius Declaration[2] and the Mauritius Strategy,[3] including the further operationalization of concrete projects and programmes.

2. The Assembly called upon the international community to support the efforts of small island developing States to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, including through the provision of financing, capacity-building and the transfer of appropriate technology; and to enhance its support for the implementation of the programme of work on island biodiversity[4] adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity at its eighth meeting, in 2006.

3. The Assembly requested the agencies of the United Nations system to ensure the mainstreaming of the Mauritius Strategy in their work programmes and reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to ensure that the Small Island Developing States Unit is sufficiently and sustainably staffed.

4. The present report describes progress made towards furthering implementation of the Mauritius Strategy in accordance with resolution 62/191. The relevant bodies of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, as well as regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States, civil society and the Governments of States Members of the United Nations were consulted in its preparation. The report also gives an account of the one-day meeting for small island developing States held during the sixteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

II. Action to further the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

A. Thematic review by the Commission on Sustainable Development

5. At its thirteenth session, the Commission on Sustainable Development decided that during its review sessions every other year, one day would be devoted to monitoring implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, focusing on the cluster of

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[1] *Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] *Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Port Louis, Mauritius, 10-14 January 2005* (United Nations publication Sales No. E.05.II.A.4 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[3] Ibid., annex II.

[4] UNEP/CBD/COP/8/31, annex I, decision VIII/I, annex.

thematic issues under review by the Commission at the time. The second of these one-day review sessions was held in May 2008, during the sixteenth session of the Commission, with specific attention given to the progress made and the continuing challenges and constraints faced by small island developing States in their efforts to achieve sustainable development, giving focus to the issues of drought, desertification, sustainable land management, rural development and agriculture.

6. The review of this thematic cluster in respect of small island developing States was informed by the report prepared by the Secretary-General for the Commission (E/CN.17/2008/9), which gave full consideration to the interdependent relationship of land, agriculture, rural development, drought and desertification in small island developing States, given their size, limited land and narrow natural resource bases and the fragility of their terrestrial and coastal ecosystems. The report addressed the challenges in sustainable land management in small island developing States, taking into account the issues impacting rural development and agriculture and their structural and environmental vulnerability, exacerbated by the varied impacts of climate change and sea-level rise, natural disasters, urbanization and globalization.

7. The small island developing States used the opportunity to underscore the importance of regular review of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States as well as the need to focus on its implementation. The Commission's mandate as the forum for that review was reiterated. The importance of the preservation of an exclusive day for small island developing States during the review sessions was emphasized.

8. Review of the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy was addressed in a general debate. Concern was expressed at the slow rate of implementation. It was noted that while the small island developing States themselves had made some progress at the national and regional levels in building the institutional capacity for sustainable development, formulating strategies and action plans and carrying out policy reforms, many of them continued to encounter constraints which impeded their sustainable development. These included limited technical, financial and human resources.

9. A review of the thematic issues being considered by the Commission was undertaken through panel-led discussions. Participants used the opportunity afforded by the day to define the issues under consideration from a small island developing States perspective. Panel discussants characterized most small island developing States as land-scarce, as having limited freshwater cycles, variable soil fertility and fragile genetic diversity and as dominated by an ocean climate. In combination these factors are known to intensify drought and desertification, especially in atolls, which can have naturally high rates of erosion and quick water run-off due to their small size. Delegates of the Pacific small island developing States supported this view, noting the seriousness of drought in their region and its negative impact on sustainable development.

10. Delegations also stressed the vulnerability of small island developing States, exacerbated by the effects of climate change including sea-level rise, coral bleaching due to warming seas, increasing threats to freshwater supply, the propagation of invasive alien species and the increased frequency and intensity of cyclones, hurricanes and other extreme weather events. The need for effective land-use strategies to address the increasing pressure on limited land resources in small island developing States through strengthened human resource and institutional

capacity and watershed, coastal zone and land use change management was considered.

11. Attention was given to the impact of invasive species on land degradation across the small island developing States. It was noted that fast-growing and water-intensive invasive flora can aggravate erosion, drought and desertification by crowding out endemic vegetation and exhausting soil and water resources. Alien fauna such as rats and snakes also have a large economic impact. In addition to threatening endemic biodiversity, such pests have also caused millions of dollars worth of damage to telecommunication infrastructure, crops and the tourism industry. In response, many States are formulating strategies to eradicate and prevent the introduction of invasive species.

12. It was noted that almost all small island developing States are witnessing the rapid migration of their people from their outer islands and hinterlands to urban areas. Panellists demonstrated how this demographic trend is linked to watershed conversion and urban development, and is in turn accelerating land and coastal-marine degradation. This is especially the case when municipalities are unable to meet rising demands for housing, zoning and service provision due to lack of capacity, regulation and enforcement mechanisms. Delegations also underscored the challenges that urbanization posed to development not only in small island developing States but in a number of other developing countries as well.

13. Discussions focused on agritourism and a range of niche markets which offered scope for the development of rural industries. Tourism was highlighted as a growth sector that provided opportunities for direct revenue transactions with rural communities, thus contributing to the revitalization of agriculture and rural development, strengthening food security in small island developing States and promoting the well-being of rural communities. Both developed and developing country partners cited examples of successful agritourism ventures, noting the benefits that accrued to other sectors. One positive linkage described included innovative product development and the pursuit of new niche markets.

14. It was also highlighted that agricultural diversification, by broadening small island developing States' traditionally narrow export economies, could improve the resilience of the rural sector to economic shocks and natural disasters. Delegations reiterated their support for small island developing States in that regard, offering to share their best practices, lessons learned and technology in addition to financial and other resources. There were also calls to further exploit ecotourism to boost rural development and ensure cultural continuity in the development process. It was also highlighted that the sustainable management of fisheries, forestry and agriculture and freshwater resources was important to improving food security and access.

15. Almost all delegations touched on the seriousness of the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise not only on drought, desertification and land management, but also on the overall sustainable development of small island developing States. Many participants highlighted the fact that global warming is expected to increase droughts and wildfires, as well as resulting in stronger storms, landslides and erosion. It is anticipated that warmer seas will undergo more coral bleaching and deadly algae bloom events. Participants underscored that resettlement from low-lying lands and outer islands was inevitable and had already affected planning. Many therefore supported the integration of climate change adaptation into land,

watershed and coastal zone management. Some countries pointed out that reforestation, sustainable land use, zoning and other sustainable measures could also improve resiliency to climate change. There were many calls for increased assistance.

16. Noting that successful rural development in small island developing States was closely linked to governance, delegations stated that as a first step some countries must ensure access to clean drinking water, energy and food security. Panellists underscored the critical need to forge connections among local, national and international policies and programmes, as well as the need for more action and implementation. It was noted that a bottom-up approach is key to improving rural livelihoods, and that responsibility for outcomes should be shared and community ownership of the development process encouraged. Because the sustainable development options for rural communities in small island developing States are limited, rural communities need empowerment, participatory assessment and training to build their capacity for helping themselves. Delegations noted that sustainable natural resource management, consideration of culture and land tenure systems and the empowering of women and youth were all important components of rural development strategies in small island developing States. It was highlighted that good policy is rooted in the priorities of rural people.

17. Many delegations emphasized the linkages between the panel discussion and small island developing States' vulnerability to rising food and energy prices. It was noted that land degradation resulting in declining agricultural productivity coupled with rising international prices could have major impacts on the ability of States to attain many of their development goals. It was noted that assistance was needed to build the human, institutional, technological and financial capacity necessary to stem losses, if not to confront a crisis, in human and economic security. Many recalled the seriousness of recent declines in official development assistance and other resources directed to small island developing States, while some development partners reiterated and announced their support for implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. There were also calls for a fair trading regime to take into account the special needs of small island developing States.

18. Speakers highlighted the contribution to the sustainable development of small island developing States through cooperation among the various stakeholders made. International partnerships, including public-private partnerships and South-South cooperation, were recognized for their potential to contribute to the mobilization of resources in support of small island developing States.

19. Appreciation was widely expressed for the opportunity afforded by the small island developing States day to review the achievements and continuing challenges faced by those States in respect of the thematic cluster. The ongoing efforts of small island developing States and their commitment to innovative action were noted. Commitments of continued support for the sustainable development efforts of those States were expressed. The need for strengthening the Small Island Developing States Unit in the Secretariat, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, to support the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy was underscored.

20. In an effort to demonstrate the rich potential in the range of products from agriculture and rural enterprise produced in small island developing States, the Small Island Developing States Unit, in collaboration with the regional

intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States and with the generous support of the Government of Ireland, organized an agro-industry exposition on small island developing States day.

21. The exhibit was launched by the Chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States and the Government of Ireland. The display highlighted the food, beverages, art, craft and other indigenous products of rural enterprises in small island developing States and demonstrated the role of culture in promoting public awareness, as well as the importance of the sustainable management of natural resources in small island developing States. A representative collection of products from the three small island developing States regions (Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea; Caribbean; and Pacific) showcased the creativity and potential of the islands' agricultural, artisanal and cultural industries including agricultural and fishery products; sugar, rum, dried/tinned foods and tinned fish; fine art, ceramics and pottery; basketry and straw works; leather goods; jewellery and metal craft; natural and herbal therapy products; and woodcraft and home furnishings.

22. Several side events and partnership events were also organized. The Commonwealth Secretariat launched its publications entitled *Sustainable Development of Small States: Issues, Challenges and Prospects* and *Small States Economic Review and Basic Statistics Volume 12*; the launch included presentations on resilience building of small States, financing of sustainable development and national sustainable development planning.

23. The Small Island Developing States Unit, in cooperation with the Sea Level Rise Foundation, brought together representatives of small island developing States in a side event to explore links between climate change and the emerging crisis of global food security and how this will affect those States. This side event focused on the impact of rising energy and food prices, as well as how climate change and sea-level rise will affect the small island developing States' ability to produce food. It also revisited issues highlighted at the 2005 ministerial event, including the need to strengthen existing regional programmes for food security; capacity-building; mainstreaming disaster risk management and climate change adaptation into agriculture and fisheries policies; and improving the performance of agriculture and agriculture-related activities by promoting agro-enterprises. In addition, a presentation was given on land policy, administration and management, stressing the importance of a national spatial data infrastructure and the use of technology in sustainable land administration and management. Partnership events on new technologies for sustainable development in small island developing States and on creative partnering to enhance sustainable development and conservation were also organized and were well attended.

B. Secretariat support

24. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Small Island Developing States Unit, continued to facilitate the coordination of system-wide implementation of the small island developing States agenda and to provide substantive support and advisory services to States with a view to advancing the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Meetings of the inter-agency consultative group on small island developing States were held to promote a more coordinated

and informed approach to Mauritius Strategy implementation among the organizations of the United Nations system, regional intergovernmental organizations of small island developing States and other partners.

25. Preparations continue for the dynamic redesign and expansion of the Unit's website, SIDSNet. In the past year, the website has been fully migrated to the Department's servers, and plans for a second-generation site are being developed. SIDSNet was designed to significantly improve small island developing States' use of information and communications technology to promote wider understanding and international recognition of the challenges they face because of their economic and environmental vulnerability. SIDSNet has sought to provide opportunities for regular contact among small island developing States of the three regions; strengthened interregional exchange; building capacity at the national level by educating stakeholders and mobilizing experts; and facilitating research, data collection and information sharing on best practices in priority areas such as environmental management, micro-enterprise development, health, education and skills training, climate change response, freshwater and sanitation and tourism management. It is expected that the revamped website will provide enhanced services to small island developing States and the wider international community.

26. The Division for Sustainable Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continued to make available assistance to the 14 small island developing States of the Pacific for capacity-building and institutional strengthening by supporting the development of national sustainable development strategies. Since its inauguration, the project has facilitated reviews of existing national and sectoral development strategies; broad exchange of experience on strategic policymaking and a participatory approach to decision-making; and the building of consensus among Pacific small island developing States on the most appropriate application of the United Nations guidelines for the formulation of national sustainable development strategies. An important output has been support to the Pacific States for the development of national sustainable development strategies, or their equivalent, and where such strategies already existed, support to improve and strengthen them.

27. The Division proposes to pursue during 2008-2009 the organization of three subregional capacity-building workshops in collaboration with the UNDP pacific subregional centre and the ESCAP subregional office in Fiji to identify the specificities of the subregions and focus on practical ways of incorporating sustainable development concerns into national planning, including how to incorporate and seek coherence with commitments made in the Mauritius Strategy, the Pacific Plan and the Millennium Development Goals. It is proposed that the workshops would target national focal points in planning ministries, as well as representatives of other key relevant ministries. The project will also continue to support the implementation of project activities for the implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

28. The Division also organized a Caribbean workshop on sanitation, entitled "Integration of sanitation policies into national development plans in the Caribbean region", which was held in Jamaica in April 2008. The workshop brought together ministers, professionals of institutions of the sector, scholars, members of civil society, non-governmental agencies, donor agencies, development agencies and the

private sector. The meeting addressed the sustainable management of wastewater and the incorporation of sanitation issues into national physical development.

C. United Nations system collaboration

29. The funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system continued their active support of Mauritius Strategy implementation and participation in the inter-agency consultative group on small island developing States, along with the regional commissions.

30. The implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity programme of work on island biodiversity continues to make an important contribution to Mauritius Strategy implementation, particularly in such areas as the control of invasive alien species, the protection and effective use of traditional knowledge and capacity-building necessary to protect island biodiversity.

31. The secretariat of the Convention unveiled a new web portal on island biodiversity (www.cbd.int/island) in 2007. It also produced a special publication on islands, *The Wealth of Islands: A Global Call for Conservation*, intended to increase public awareness of the need for island biodiversity conservation.

32. The secretariat of the Convention was part of the steering committee of the international conference entitled "The European Union and its overseas entities: strategies to counter climate change and biodiversity loss", held on Reunion Island in July 2008. The conference is the first step of an initiative that aims to enhance actions relating to climate change assessment, adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management for the overseas entities, most of them islands, that host a significant share of global biodiversity. It proposed new strategies and action programmes to enhance regional cooperation with small island developing States and other island States, particularly within the Global Island Partnership.

33. The secretariat continued to support the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA), including by hosting its web pages (www.cbd.int/island/glispa.shtml) and co-organizing side events at major meetings of the Convention. In September 2007, the CBD secretariat co-chaired the GLISPA strategy meeting, which adopted the GLISPA draft strategic plan for 2008-2010. The secretariat also participated in the high-level GLISPA event at which announcements were made for significant conservation commitments to protect the future of islands, with pledges of more than $20 million.

34. In addition, the Bahamas announced the Caribbean Challenge, a historic commitment made by that country together with the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to protect nearly 3 million hectares of marine habitat over the next four years. This initiative complemented commitments made in other regions, including the Micronesia Challenge, whereby five Micronesian countries and territories made a shared commitment to effectively conserve at least 30 per cent of the near-shore resources and 20 per cent of the terrestrial resources by 2020; the agreement of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea, to work together to protect coral diversity in the Coral Triangle; Fiji's commitment to establish 30 per cent of its inshore and offshore marine areas as a network of protected areas by

2020; and the launching by Kiribati of the Phoenix Islands marine protected area, the third-largest such area in the world.

35. Also noteworthy was the launch of the Sea Level Rise Foundation, which will bring resources and expertise together to support small island developing States islands and other low-lying areas in adapting to the threat of climate change.

36. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Caribbean Environment Programme has actively promoted accession to and ratification of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities within the framework of the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region. The Caribbean Environment Programme, in collaboration with the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, also assisted in facilitating the development and implementation of national programmes of action for the prevention of pollution from land-based sources and activities.

37. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UNEP Caribbean Regional Coordinating Unit and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Information and Training Centre for the wider Caribbean hosted five pollution prevention seminars in Saint Lucia, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda on the ratification and implementation of annex V to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships. The Caribbean Environment Programme also supported the convening of a workshop on the development of a regional cooperation mechanism for response to oil spills.

38. The project entitled "Integrating watershed and coastal areas management for Caribbean small island developing States", funded by the Global Environment Facility, supports legislative and policy reforms at the island States level, capacity-building to implement those reforms and demonstration projects on key issues facing individual States. Most demonstration projects illustrate how the reduction of contaminants can address water scarcity and improve the quality of the marine environment and coastal resources. A series of studies has been conducted to guide countries in the implementation of the project.

39. Coral reef monitoring and assessments were conducted by subregional nodes in the wider Caribbean region, and a tool for the economic valuation of coral reefs was developed in collaboration with the World Resource Institute. In response to the designation of 2008 as the International Year of the Reef, the Caribbean Environment Programme organized a meeting for coral reef managers and relevant organizations to assist in planning for the celebration of the Year in the wider Caribbean, as well as to collate inputs from managers on research needs for the eleventh International Coral Reef Society symposium, held in July 2008.

40. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been addressing the management and conservation of aquatic resources; utilization, marketing and trade of fishery products; and the development of fisheries policies. Focus is being given to the promotion of responsible fisheries sector management at the global, regional and national levels; the promotion of increased contribution of responsible fisheries and aquaculture to world food supplies and food security; and the global monitoring and strategic analysis of fisheries, with priority given to the development of databases and analysis of information.

41. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States continued its advocacy for small island developing States. The Office also mobilized resources with the Government of Turkey to prepare a report on enhancing Pacific connectivity in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation and the South Pacific Forum secretariat. The report was approved by the ESCAP Pacific islands ministers and was recently launched in Asia and the Pacific by ESCAP.

42. The first multi-country catastrophe insurance pool, the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, was established by the World Bank in 2007. The Facility will provide participating Governments from the Caribbean region with immediate liquidity in the event of a natural disaster. Sixteen countries purchased catastrophe insurance from the Facility for the 2007/08 season.

43. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean worked to strengthen Mauritius Strategy implementation in the Caribbean region by conducting a survey of the challenges that Caribbean small island developing States experience in implementing the Mauritius Strategy. The research findings have proven useful in assessing the capacity needs of the Caribbean region for effective Mauritius Strategy implementation.

44. Significant progress towards the operationalization of the regional coordinating mechanism to monitor Mauritius Strategy implementation in the region was also achieved. The mechanism will comprise an intergovernmental council; a technical advisory committee; a national focal point mechanism; and a secretariat. The technical advisory committee convened its first meeting in April 2008 to plan its programme of work for the next two years. Broad areas of support were identified, including institutional strengthening and capacity-building on issues of trade and the environment; information dissemination; improving and gathering data; and best practices. Attention will be given to the preparation of core documents and the establishment of a technology platform for hosting and sharing relevant information.

45. Strategic areas of intervention in support of the small island developing States agenda to be addressed include regional partnerships for sustainable waste management. This would involve technical and financial support to member countries in meeting commitments under environmental agreements to which they are signatories e.g. the Basel Convention and the oil spills protocol to the Cartagena Convention. Development of a regional water and sanitation policy would entail pursuing a regional approach to management of freshwater resources. Monitoring the impacts of tourism on the environment is another key area, with focus on developing strategies to determine the carrying capacity of the environment and the current impacts of tourism on the marine, coastal and terrestrial environments, in collaboration with the Caribbean Tourism Organization and the Association of Caribbean States.

46. The ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre has been working to support the implementation of national sustainable development strategies in the Pacific small island developing States. In 2007 it carried out a study of the planning processes in three least developed countries, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, to verify compliance with the principles on national sustainable development strategies.

ESCAP proposes to collaborate with subregional organizations in providing further support for the development of national sustainable development strategies.

D. Regional and national action

47. The Pacific Island Forum secretariat completed in February 2008 the drafting of a regional action plan for implementation of the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change 2006-2015, which was adopted by the Forum's member States in 2005. It is expected that the plan will galvanize action on climate change in the region and mobilize further technical and financial support for the initiative.

48. The Forum secretariat, with the assistance of regional experts and the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific, also developed a preliminary economic impact survey for the region from the perspective of climate change. The need to mainstream climate change considerations in sustainable development activities was recognized. The secretariat has therefore initiated a mainstreaming exercise with other agencies of the Council. An agreed Council-wide programme on mainstreaming has also been agreed on, including roles and responsibilities, an indicative budget, and a timeline for the implementation of mainstreaming programmes for 2008-2010.

49. National action plans for climate change are also being developed and implemented, along with a push for mainstreaming climate change into national development planning, drawing on the Pacific Islands framework for action on climate change and the associated implementation plan. A workshop on mainstreaming environmental issues was held in February 2008, which included discussion on mainstreaming climate change into national development planning.

50. Draft guidelines are currently being discussed by leading members of the Council of Regional Organizations of the Pacific in this area. National adaptation programmes of action have been developed for Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu under the Global Environment Facility's Least Developed Country Fund. The Solomon Islands programme of action is near completion. The Global Environment Facility has approved the development of project identification forms for implementation of programmes of action for Tuvalu, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Kiribati and Samoa. In addition, there has been a request to extend the process to Pacific Island countries that are not least developed countries.

51. The Pacific Alliance for Stability, approved by the Council of the Global Environment Facility in April 2008, is offering $98.6 million for the next four years for the Pacific, which includes a focus on climate change adaptation ($30.4 million) and mitigation measures ($14.7 million). One such major regional initiative approved under the Pacific Alliance for Stability is the Pacific adaptation to climate change project, one of the few projects globally to access the Special Climate Change Fund of the Global Environment Facility. In the April session of the Global Environment Facility Council, the project inception form was approved, which secures $13.1 million of adaptation funding for the region. The objective of the project is to enhance the resilience of a number of key development sectors in the Pacific islands to the adverse effects of climate change. Thirteen Pacific island countries will take part in the project.

52. The Pacific islands greenhouse gas abatement through renewable energy project, a five-year project, funded by the Global Environment Facility that started in 2007, and in which 11 countries are participating, seeks to remove the technical, institutional, financial, market, policy and awareness barriers to the widespread and productive utilization of feasible renewable energy technologies in the Pacific island countries. The project aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33 per cent under the business-as-usual scenario by 2015.

53. Worthy of note is the adaptation fund established by the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali in December 2007. An adaptation fund board was elected and includes in its membership Tuvalu, Jamaica, Cuba and the Maldives. The board has met twice so far in 2008 to develop rules and procedures on ways to access the fund.

54. The Pacific Island Forum secretariat has proposed that 2009 be the Pacific Year of Climate Change. The secretariat has prepared a regional campaign for 2009, which places emphasis on raising awareness and understanding of climate change as a process with decision makers and communities by focusing on action to address the issues and challenges of today to avoid the unmanageable and manage the unavoidable. The proposed campaign objectives are to promote action on adaptation to and mitigation of climate change at the regional, national and community levels; to promote changes of behaviour; to raise awareness at the international level about the need to support adaptation to and mitigation of climate change in the region; and to reflect these concerns and needs in the outcome documents of the fifteenth Conference of the Parties.

55. In support of disaster risk reduction and disaster management, the UNDP Pacific Centre, working with partners such as the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC), is developing and implementing Pacific Disaster net, a regional disaster risk management database providing information and baseline material on natural disasters to support better preparation and response. National action plans for mainstreaming disaster risk management have been developed for Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands through the partnership network led by SOPAC and involving the Forum secretariat, the UNDP Pacific Centre, the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and other development partners.

56. SPREP, with the support of the Government of Australia, convened the second scientific and technical advisory committee meeting and the first steering committee meeting for the pacific regional centre for the joint implementation for the Basel and Waigani Conventions. Training workshops on the effects of maritime pollution were conducted in Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu. Issues covered during these workshops included updating national marine pollution prevention plans to assist in environmental management and updating of the model marine pollution legislation to ensure consistency with IMO conventions.

57. The CARICOM secretariat continued its support to the process of establishment and operationalization of the regional coordinating mechanism for Mauritius Strategy implementation. CARICOM also collaborated with regional organizations and member States in the development of the large marine ecosystem project funded by the Global Environment Facility. The secretariat is also actively involved in preparation of the work programme of the Caribbean Sea Commission,

now mandated to implement the mandate of the member States of the wider Caribbean region to protect the resources of the Caribbean Sea.

58. CARICOM has supported the member States of the region in numerous activities related to climate change adaptation and mitigation. A Caribbean regional strategy on climate change is being developed, and a regional task force has been established to support Caribbean delegations in the negotiations of the post-2012 framework for the Kyoto Protocol. The secretariat provided technical support to the International Workshop on Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Tourism Sector. An ad hoc working group has been established to address the management of freshwater resources in the countries of the region, particularly in the light of the impact of climate change on drought and water scarcity. The CARICOM Heads of Government at their meeting in July 2008 considered the relationships between climate change, energy and food security.

59. The CARICOM secretariat has under consideration a memorandum of understanding with the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The secretariat is also supporting the preparation of national biodiversity programmes and action plans. The secretariat continues to provide support to the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency in the implementation of the comprehensive disaster management strategy and programme framework for 2007-2012.

60. Mauritius has continued making progress by preparing an initial national communication and completing a climate change action plan and a technology needs assessment. A national energy policy and action plan (2008-2025) is also being finalized, with focus on renewable energy and energy efficiency.

61. Mauritius is preparing a comprehensive national strategy for disaster risk reduction and a tsunami action plan has been submitted that includes impact mitigation and a comprehensive risk or vulnerability assessment.

62. In the area of coastal and marine resources, a regional strategic plan for the management of ballast water has been established to minimize the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms and build capacity in the region. With IMO assistance, a national seminar was held in 2008 to create awareness of the management of ballast water and to facilitate a better understanding of the technical implications of the 2004 International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water and Sediments. Awareness-building initiatives and baseline surveys are also under way.

63. In the area of biodiversity, programmes for the captive breeding and translocation of endemic fauna are ongoing. A seed bank project is progressing with more than 150 species of native plants seeds collected and banked. A strategic plan has been prepared for the control of invasive species in agriculture, biodiversity and health and there are ongoing control programmes to eradicate invasive weeds in the conservation management areas.

64. To further education for sustainable development, the Mauritius Institute of Education has been working on the development of a new curriculum framework for the lower secondary sector that incorporates sustainable development as a cross-cutting theme. This curriculum renewal will include the review of science and technology activities in relation to environmentally sound technologies and sustainable development.

65. Mauritius has been selected as one of the pilot countries by UNEP to develop a national programme and action plan on sustainable consumption and production. A memorandum of understanding was signed between UNEP and the Ministry of Environment in May 2007 for the elaboration of the programme by July 2008. The national programme on sustainable consumption and production for Mauritius is being finalized.

66. The national environment policy (2007) also makes provision for strategies and policy instruments to promote sustainable consumption and production. Multi-stakeholder working groups were constituted by the Ministry of Environment in order to develop the action plans on the priority areas.

67. In addressing national and regional enabling environments and poverty reduction, a bold reform programme introduced in the 2006-2007 budget has had a positive impact on gross domestic product (5.4 per cent growth in 2007). The main drivers of this new growth trajectory were tourism, financial services, construction and manufacturing, including the export processing zone. Improvements in the overall business climate, through the removal of bottlenecks in the product and factor markets and in key infrastructure, have led to a surge in investment and in capital flows.

68. However, a number of external and internal factors are still impacting adversely on the level of prices, savings and employment in the country. The recent trends in commodity prices, especially as regards oil and foodstuffs, combined with rigidities in local factor markets, are further fuelling inflation. This is seriously affecting the purchasing power of the population, particularly the lower income and vulnerable groups.

69. Recent studies have indicated that pockets of poverty prevail in some specific suburban and coastal regions in Mauritius and on the island of Rodrigues. A special committee for the eradication of absolute poverty has been established to investigate the specific needs of the poor, provide urgent assistance where needed. The overall objective of the Government is to eradicate absolute poverty within seven to 10 years.

70. The Government of Seychelles, through a project on adaptation of the water sector to climate change, proposes to tackle the water shortage problem from several angles that include promoting water conservation and infrastructural changes. Seychelles is also pursuing a project to address adaptation of the coastal zone to climate change. The goal of the proposed project is to integrate climate change concerns in the coastal zone sector planning and development frameworks and to implement long-term adaptation measures that increase the resilience of the coastal zone sector to the impact of climate change. This initiative is based on the findings of the Seychelles initial national communication, which identifies the vulnerability of coastal zones of Seychelles to climate change as one of the major issues to be addressed in the coming years.

71. A national disaster management policy has recently been finalized with UNDP support. The policy will act as a catalyst to mainstream disaster management and risk reduction activities within the broader government programmes and activities. The policy will also be cross-referenced with other national policies such as the land-use planning policy. The infrastructural development policy for outer islands,

which governs method of construction to withstand adverse weather conditions, was approved in 2007.

72. Seychelles remains actively engaged in the intergovernmental coordination group which is working to establish the Indian Ocean tsunami warning system. The system is expected to become operational by the end of 2009, enabling all countries affected by the 2004 tsunami to access and share data pertaining to tsunami risks and warning.

73. In keeping with a long-term objective of the Government of Seychelles to create a maximum number of marine protected areas in order to assist in the sustainability of inshore marine resources and maintain marine biodiversity, six areas have been designated, covering an area of 3,457 hectares. Marine protected areas have proven very successful not only in preserving fish stocks but in improving the spawning potential and population parameters such as reproduction and growth.

74. There is an acknowledged need to develop capacity for sustainable land management and self-generating agricultural ecosystems by building on communal tenure systems and traditional land-use planning and practices for crop, livestock and aquaculture production, taking into account the increasing competition for land resources by tourism, urbanization and other activities. A Geographic Information System project to better manage agricultural land was initiated and will be completed by December 2008.

75. In October 2007 Seychelles launched its agricultural development strategy for 2007-2011, focusing on land-based food production systems in which Seychelles has a comparative advantage. The strategy sets targets for the production of various foods and identifies major issues associated with land, inputs and supplies, agricultural infrastructure, policy and institutional support, legislation, marketing, information and human resource development. In May 2008 Seychelles further launched its food security strategy for 2008-2011, using the agricultural development strategy as a platform for action.

76. Concern has been expressed at the spread of alien invasive species and climate change as continuing challenges to the biodiversity of Seychelles. The Government is in the process of revising legislation to ensure that the country's biodiversity is maintained. A project funded by the Global Environment Facility has been initiated to address the issues of biological security and climate change. There is a need to strengthen indigenous capacity to implement such projects. There are many challenges resulting from the lack of human capacity and lack of financial resources to implement environmental programmes. The importance attached to addressing climate change effectively is reflected in the initiative of the President of Seychelles to launch the Sea Level Rise Foundation, a platform where small island developing States can share knowledge about climate change issues.

E. International support

77. The Government of Australia is committed to a new and elevated engagement with its Pacific island partners. Pacific partnerships for development are central to Australia's new engagement in the region. A strong supporter of the Millennium Development Goals, the Government of Australia is determined to increase the

quantity and the quality of Australian official development assistance and will continue to increase overseas aid with the goal of providing 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015/16. Emphasis will be given to investment in key sectors such as health, basic education, water, sanitation, environment and climate change. Australia will continue to work closely with developing countries, particularly in the Pacific.

78. The Pacific partnerships for development will be underpinned by principles including mutual respect and partnership, recognizing the principle of country-led development and mutual responsibility, with sharper focus on accountability. Australia has commenced discussions with Papua New Guinea and Samoa on establishing partnership frameworks.

79. A package of Pacific-focused initiatives will be drawn on in establishing Pacific partnerships for development, which links to key areas of the Mauritius Strategy. A Pacific land programme will help reduce conflict over land and make land more readily available for development. A Pacific regional infrastructure facility will support better maintained and more reliable basic infrastructure in Pacific island countries, greater local employment opportunities for youth and associated improvements in rural service delivery and business costs. A Pacific public sector capacity initiative will support a better-trained, more effective public sector to plan and implement new development policies in the Pacific, with stronger linkages between Australian and Pacific counterpart institutions.

80. Australia is also committed to closer cooperation with New Zealand in the planning and implementation of Australia's development assistance in the Pacific and to working closely with the multilateral development banks. A harmonized programme is being developed which includes collaboration on baseline data on development and governance indicators. A recently agreed Cook Islands joint country strategy for 2008-2017 between the Cook Islands Government, the Australian Agency for International Development and the New Zealand Agency for International Development is an example of this. Australia will also invest $150 million Australian dollars over three years, with $35 million Australian dollars in 2008/09, to meet high priority climate adaptation needs in vulnerable countries in the Pacific.

81. Denmark continues to support the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action through activities undertaken in the Pacific. The focus has been on promoting renewable energy development and energy efficiency. Denmark granted $1.9 million to SOPAC to implement the Pacific islands energy policies and strategic action planning project, which will be completed in 2008. The project supports improved capacity in 14 Pacific island developing States to develop practical national energy policies. Support to Small Island development States has also been channelled through Danish non-governmental organizations for activities focused on technical assistance and a knowledge bank on renewable energy.

82. Norway has allocated 2.5m NOK to the project "Many Strong Voices". The project, which links research and advocacy with a view to improving knowledge and skills for adaptation to climate change, has enabled exchange of competence and knowledge on developing coastal communities' capacity for dealing with climate change between small island developing States communities and communities in the Arctic. Some 16 Arctic and island countries are currently actively involved in the

project. The first year of the project is now successfully completed. Norway intends to further support this initiative.

83. Norway has also allocated 36m kroner to the UNEP/Grid Arendal continental shelf programme. The programme aims at providing Small Island Developing States in particular with the data necessary to make a claim to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf for an extension of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

84. The Government of Iceland sponsored a high-level round table and business and investment forum on international cooperation for sustainable development in Caribbean small island developing States in Barbados in March 2008. The meeting identified areas of mutual interest to increase cooperation, namely the sustainable use of natural resources, climate change, renewable energy resources, fisheries management, capacity-building and the advancement of women. The meeting, which was attended by 16 small island developing States in the Caribbean, the Government of Iceland, regional intergovernmental organizations, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and several United Nations programmes and agencies, set the basis for closer cooperation and the development of partnerships between Iceland and the Caribbean region.

85. The Commonwealth secretariat, in collaboration with UNEP and the Alliance of Small Island States, and with technical support from the Foundation for International Environmental Law and Development, organized a workshop to build the capacity of small island developing State climate negotiators in Windsor, United Kingdom in May 2008.

86. The workshop was intended to deepen the understanding of climate negotiators of the issues being addressed in the current negotiating process, and wider political initiatives around the negotiations; to develop a list of the key technical information gaps that small States need to address to enhance their participation in the negotiating process; to consider the priority outcomes for small States in the climate change negotiations; and to develop a forward-looking strategy and practical plan of action to support small States in the negotiating process. The workshop responded to the need for strengthened negotiating capacity expressed by the small island developing States, particularly in respect of ongoing climate change negotiations.

87. The International Ocean Institute continued forging partnerships in support of sustainable development of small island developing States. A key contribution was training conducted through the Institute's network of operational centres. The courses offered included a training programme on ocean governance. The Institute also continued to offer the Dianielle De St. Jorre scholarship which allows one woman from a small island developing State to pursue a marine-related course at the tertiary level. Through its OceanLearn programme, the Institute works to build partnerships to deliver education and capacity-building in the sustainable management of ocean resources. Among the successful courses offered in 2007 were a workshop on responsible fisheries in Fiji, a training course on the development and management of marine protected areas in the Solomon Islands and a marine protected areas capacity-building programme in Fiji.

88. The Institute also conducts a women and youth sea programme to enhance the participation and capacity of these groups in ocean and coastal affairs. Projects include a training initiative concerning alternative sources of livelihood for women

in the Pacific and an a website for children. Other programmes include a community-based resource management and governance project on Gau Island, Fiji, and training courses on ecosystem dynamics and maritime boundary delimitation offered through the host institute in Cuba.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

89. **There are clear indications that concerted efforts are being made at the national, regional and international levels to further implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Continued support for the development and strengthening of national sustainable development strategies will enhance national capacity for more effective and coherent development administration. In this regard, support for the design and implementation of national sustainable development strategies in small island developing States will continue in the Pacific, and the possibility of pursuing similar projects in the other regions will be actively explored.**

90. **Further work on the design of a framework for mainstreaming and monitoring the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy will be pursued, promoting its coordinated implementation with existing development strategies and plans, including the Millennium Development Goals. Particular attention will be given to the challenges of capacity which small island developing States continue to face in their effort to implement the Mauritius Strategy.**

91. **Significant attention was given in the past year to the increasingly grave impact of climate change on the well-being and security of small island developing States. The decision of the General Assembly, in paragraph 12 of its resolution 62/191, to review at its sixty-fifth session progress made in addressing the vulnerabilities of small island developing States through implementation of the Mauritius Strategy is therefore both relevant and timely. Substantial attention will be given in the coming year to preparation for this review.**

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Sustainable development: follow-up and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States

Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report gives an account of the range of initiatives activities undertaken at the regional and national levels within the Caribbean region to ensure the protection of the Caribbean Sea from degradation, pollution and loss of marine biodiversity, and provides an update on the regional and international support that has been extended towards the promotion of the sustainable development of the resources of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations.

The report also contains an annex with a report of the Association of the Caribbean States on its work, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/197.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 61/197 of 20 December 2006, entitled "Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations", the General Assembly called on the United Nations system and the international community to assist, as appropriate, Caribbean countries and their regional organizations in their efforts to ensure the protection of the Caribbean Sea from degradation as a result of pollution from ships, from illegal dumping or accidental release of hazardous waste and dangerous chemicals, to develop programmes to halt the loss of marine biodiversity in the Caribbean Sea; to support national and regional activities for the promotion of the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources; to assist the region in the implementation of their programmes of disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, management, relief and recovery.

2. The General Assembly, welcoming the continued efforts of the States members of the Association of Caribbean States to further develop their concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development, invited the Association to submit a report on its progress in implementation of the resolution. The Secretary-General was requested to report to the General Assembly to report to it at its sixty-third session, under the sub-item entitled "Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States" of the item entitled "Sustainable development", on the status of implementation of the present resolution, taking into account the views expressed by relevant regional organizations.

3. The present report includes information received from entities of the United Nations system and relevant regional organizations invited to report on their efforts towards implementing resolution 61/197, as well as information on activities undertaken at the national level by Member States. Special focus is given the report of the Association of Caribbean States, which is the regional organization designated by the Member States of the Caribbean with overall responsibility for implementation of the Caribbean Sea initiative.

II. Activities undertaken at the national and regional levels

A. Regional activities

4. The Association of Caribbean States remained actively engaged with its mandate to support the ongoing initiative of the region to have the international community declare the Caribbean Sea a special area in the context of sustainable development. To this end, the Association established the Caribbean Sea Commission in September, 2006, to provide a structure for political oversight, technical resources and research support for the Caribbean Sea initiative, and to promote regional efforts towards achieving the preservation and sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea.

5. Technical support for the work of the Commission was provided by regional experts working through a technical advisory group created by the Association of Caribbean States, and research to advance the Caribbean Sea Initiative received significant contribution from the Caribbean Sea Ecosystem Assessment, a project

led by the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine and the Cropper Foundation, in collaboration with The Institute of Marine Affairs of Trinidad and Tobago, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caribbean Conservation Association and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute.

6. The Caribbean Sea Commission, at its most recent meeting held in July 2008, finalized its Plan of Action and programme of activities. The report of the Association of Caribbean States, attached as an annex to the present report, provides a comprehensive account of the technical, administrative and political initiative being invested in the Caribbean Sea initiative.

7. The UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme, a member of the Caribbean Sea Commission, has remained an active partner in the Caribbean Sea initiative, integrally involved in programmes related to marine spill and pollution management; the establishment of ecosystem, habitat and species conservation measures; and capacity-building.

8. The Caribbean Environment Programme has actively promoted accession/ratification of the Protocol concerning land-based sources of marine pollution within the framework of the Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region. National promotional workshops were held in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama and Saint Lucia.

9. The Caribbean Environment Programme, in collaboration with the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities also assisted in facilitating the development and implementation of national programmes of action for the prevention of pollution from land-based sources and activities. Direct support was provided to completion of these plans in Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados. Ongoing efforts are focused on strategic planning and sustainable financing to enable these national programmes of action to be mainstreamed into development planning processes and implemented.

10. Following the preparation of a sewage needs assessment guidance document for implementing annex III of the Protocol concerning Pollution from Land-based Sources and Activities (LBS Protocol), relating to wastewater management, pilot projects were initiated in Saint Lucia and Jamaica to develop national planning mechanisms to control marine pollution from domestic sewage. Detailed project plans for improving infrastructure for sewage and wastewater management were also developed. Similar sewage needs assessments are ongoing in Tobago and Panama and, once finalized, efforts will focus on the sharing of experiences from these national assessments.

11. As a complementary activity to the regional sewage needs activities and further to the outcomes of the sewage needs assessments conducted in Saint Lucia, a regional workshop to promote environmentally sound technologies in the provision of sanitation and water at the community level was conducted in Jamaica. One of the proposed initiatives highlighted at the workshop was the establishment of a Caribbean revolving fund for regional wastewater investment and management.

12. The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations Regional Coordinating Unit for the Caribbean Environment Programme (UNEP CAR/RCU)

and the Regional Activity Centre for Regional Marine Pollution Emergency, Information and Training Centre-Wider Caribbean hosted five pollution prevention seminars in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Saint Lucia on the ratification and implementation of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL), annex V. The seminars facilitated the exchange of information between participants on legislative and administrative procedures regarding annex V of MARPOL, specifically calling attention to the issue of waste reception facilities in the wider Caribbean region, with a view to placing the special area provisions of annex V of MARPOL into effect. The Caribbean Environment Programme also supported the convening of a workshop on the development of a regional cooperation mechanism for response to oil spills, which will be completed in 2008.

13. The publication entitled "Marine Litter in the Wider Caribbean — A Regional Overview and Action Plan" was developed by UNEP CAR/RCU in collaboration with regional experts as a part of a pilot project initiative with support from the UNEP Regional Seas Programme and the Swedish Government. The primary goal of this pilot project was to assist in the environmental protection and sustainable development of the wider Caribbean region related to the prevention and reduction of marine litter. Complementary activities under way include the creation of a marine litter database that will provide marine debris data for the region and access to related links and collaborating organizations. Further action towards the implementation of the regional action plan is being tested in three pilot countries: Barbados, Guyana and Saint Lucia, to strengthen related legislation and policy requirements, and monitoring and economic assessment mechanisms and improve education awareness programmes to reduce national and regional impacts of marine litter.

14. The Global Environment Facility-funded project on the theme "Integrating watershed and coastal areas management (IWCAM) in small island developing States of the Caribbean" supports legislative and policy reform at the island States level, capacity-building to implement those reforms, and demonstration projects on key issues facing individual States. Most demonstration projects launched illustrated how the reduction of contaminants can address water scarcity and improve the quality of the marine environment and coastal resources. A series of studies have been conducted to guide countries in the implementation of the IWCAM project: review of Global Environment Facility (GEF) Indicators Mechanisms; an inventory of policy and legislation relevant to IWCAM; a review of relevant and ongoing projects; and an assessment of geographic information systems for IWCAM. Guidance materials related to model legislation and accession to relevant multilateral environmental agreements, including the Cartagena Convention and the LBS Protocol, was also produced. Regional activities also included public awareness-raising through a variety of media, including quarterly newsletters, notably the *Caribbean WaterWays*.

15. The GEF-funded project on the theme "Reducing pesticide run-off to the Caribbean Sea" was initiated in Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Colombia to protect the Caribbean marine environment by reducing pesticides runoff, implementing comprehensive management practices and specific measures to control the use and application of pesticides in the agricultural sector. National coordinating committees were established with ample stakeholder participation. Capacities, strengths and

weaknesses for monitoring of pesticides in the environment were identified, and workplans were drafted for the development of a coastal monitoring programme in the three countries.

16. As a co-Chair of the White Water to Blue Water partnership initiative, the Caribbean Environment Programme developed partnerships to enhance integrated approaches in areas such as wastewater and sanitation, sustainable agricultural practices, integrated coastal management, sustainable tourism and environmentally sound marine transport in the wider Caribbean region. The partnership initiative also provides for discussions and information sharing between potential partners from these different areas to collaborate on projects to be implemented in the wider Caribbean region.

17. In order to enhance the capacity of the countries of the wider Caribbean region to implement the LBS Protocol and to improve the knowledge about the status and quality of the marine environment and its resources, a partnership called "Regional Network in Marine Science and Technology for the Caribbean: The Know-why Network" is under implementation, with partners that include the Marine Research Institute of the Ministry of Environment of Colombia, IOCARIBE and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Assessment and monitoring programmes have been initiated to update baseline pollution information through scientific analysis, and capacity-building facilitates the increased use of technologies such as geographical information systems for mapping the marine environment, water quality and pollution loads from land-based sources. Existing and proposed information systems are under evaluation to develop a pollution information node and a database on the state of the marine environment of the wider Caribbean region.

18. The Caribbean Environment Programme, through its Protocol concerning Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife (SPAW), provided support to sustainable management initiatives for queen conch and spiny lobster. Activities include support to the development of management plans for conch in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados and development of a monitoring and management manual for queen conch. Capacity-building activities were implemented in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for the management of the conch and lobster fisheries.

19. Coral reef monitoring and assessments were conducted by subregional nodes in the wider Caribbean region, and a tool for economic valuation of coral reefs was developed in collaboration with the World Resource Institute. In response to the designation of 2008 as the International Year of the Reef, the Caribbean Environment Programme and SPAW organized a meeting for coral reef managers and relevant organizations to assist with planning for the celebration of the Year and outlined activities for the International Year of the Reef 2008 Campaign in the Wider Caribbean, and to collate inputs from managers on research needs for the upcoming eleventh International Coral Reef Society Symposium, in July 2008.

20. The Mesoamerican Reef Alliance project was finalized in 2007. This was a Caribbean Environment Programme partnership developed in conjunction with the International Coral Reef Action Network, and a collaborative effort aimed at confronting the decline of coral reef ecosystems and improving the economic and environmental sustainability of the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef through capacity-building activities, the development of better practices, and building of partnerships

with the private sector. Project partners are now well positioned to continue capacity-building efforts and development of local partnerships and alliances.

21. The Organization of American States (OAS), consistent with its mandate to support its member countries in advancing sustainable development and natural disaster risk reduction, participated in several activities in promotion of the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea.

22. As part of a GEF-funded US$ 4 million project executed by OAS in cooperation with UNEP, a study on the impact of a sedimentation plume on Caribbean coastal waters was carried out by the Laboratory of Marine Chemistry and the Laboratory of Oceanography and Coastal Management of the National University of Costa Rica, jointly with the Department of Environmental Sciences of the Environmental Science and Technology Faculty of the Central American University of Nicaragua. A series of digital maps for all surveyed parameters was produced, along with tabular data, which provided comprehensive analysis of the impact of upstream sedimentation production and its transportation to the coastal and marine zone, as well as its impact on biodiversity and water quality.

23. The Caribbean Hazard Mitigation Capacity-Building Programme, completed in 2007, was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and executed by OAS, with implementation at the regional level by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency. The project sought to enhance the capacity of the Caribbean region to reduce its vulnerability to natural hazards through the development of national hazard mitigation policies and plans, the promotion of hazard mapping and vulnerability assessment information as decision-making supports to hazard mitigation interventions, and by facilitating the integration of comprehensive safer building practices in the informal building sector through training and certification.

24. Project activities were implemented in four pilot States: Belize, British Virgin Islands, Grenada and Saint Lucia. National hazard mitigation policies and plans were drafted, adopted and integrated into the national planning of the project's participating countries; vulnerability risk assessments were generated for storm surge, sea level rise, and coastal flooding; and the capacity of the informal construction sector to implement safer construction techniques was strengthened.

25. The Caribbean Planning for Adaptation to Climate Change Project, funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and also complete, focused on building capacities in the Caribbean region for climate change adaptation interventions in general and sea level rise in particular. This project was mainly carried out through generating vulnerability assessments information, formulating adaptive planning mechanisms, and implementation of institutional and technical capacity-building activities in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) participating countries.

26. This project had four main elements: the design and establishment of a sea level/climate monitoring network; the establishment of databases and information systems; an inventory of coastal resources; and use and formulation of initial adaptation policies. Its main outputs included the establishment of a sea level and climate monitoring system with the related data management networks in 12 CARICOM countries; improved climate-related information access; and increased

awareness of policymakers of the impact of climate hazard risk on national development.

27. The Department of Sustainable Development of the OAS also initiated a project on the theme "Eco-economics and management effectiveness of the coastal zone in the Caribbean". Work is under way on cost-effective interventions to protect the "supply" of biodiversity as an economic asset; on a marine system valuation of the "demand" for biodiversity; and on the establishment of marine park management effectiveness databases. Eco-economic analysis of the Montego Bay Marine Park and its environs in Jamaica, for example, indicate that total benefits from the Montego Bay reefs are US$ 401 million net present value. Cost-effective expenditures to improve reef health include the installation of a sediment trap, waste aeration, implementation of improved household solid waste collection, and implementation of economic incentives to improve waste management by the hotel industry.

28. The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) secretariat instituted a sustainable oceans governance programme to promote regional economic development through the sustainable management of ocean resources and protection of the marine environment. The programme is intended to enable the OECS secretariat to create an institutional framework for regional cooperation in transboundary ocean management, strengthen capacity for development and implementation of oceanic law and policy, and facilitate technical cooperation.

29. During the incubation of the OECS sustainable oceans governance programme, activities undertaken focused on developing an institutional structure and terms of reference for an oceans management unit; auditing existing ocean resources regimes, which has revealed the need for the development of clean national policy, stronger legal frameworks, national coordinating mechanisms, the provision of resources, and expansion of the OECS role; and reviewing key provisions of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other related agreements.

30. OECS States are giving consideration to a number of priority areas, including participation in the Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme, which enables flag States to assess how effectively they implement and enforce relevant IMO convention standards.

31. In the area of regional security, the OECS States continue to undertake maritime security interventions through the regional security system. The regional security system promotes cooperation in the prevention and interdiction of trafficking in illegal narcotics, national emergencies, immigration, fisheries protection, customs, maritime policing, natural disasters and national security.

32. Under the OECS fisheries management and development strategy, States are currently giving consideration to a number of issues, including the formulation of a fisheries management arrangement for migratory pelagic fish and large coastal pelagic species; strengthening regional organizations and implementation and enforcement of international agreements; the development of strategies for sustainably managing fisheries, taking into account community needs and climate change; increased benefit flows from employment in fisheries; determining the suitability of vessels and platforms in use; and supporting legislation developed as part of the OECS secretariat assistance programme.

33. OECS welcomed the increase in capacity-building activities of the United Nations Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, including training courses on marine protected areas, in cooperation with the International Ocean Institute. Of particular value was the training course started by the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea at the subregional level to assist States in the preparation of submissions for the delineation of the continental shelf.

34. FAO has been addressing the management and conservation of aquatic resources, the utilization, marketing and trade of fishery products, and the development of fisheries policies. Focus is being given to the promotion of responsible fisheries sector management at all levels; the promotion of increased contribution of responsible fisheries and aquaculture to world food supplies and food security; and the global monitoring and strategic analysis of fisheries, with priority given to the development of databases and analysis of information.

B. International support

35. Norway has allocated NOK 2.5 million to the project "Many strong voices". The project, which links research and advocacy with a view to improving knowledge and skills for adaptation to climate change, has enabled exchange of competence and knowledge on developing coastal communities' capacity for dealing with climate change between small island developing States communities and communities in the Arctic region. Some 16 Arctic and island countries are currently actively involved in the project. The first year of the project has been successfully completed. Norway intends to further support this initiative.

36. Norway has also allocated NOK 36 million to the UNEP/Grid Arendal's Continental Shelf Programme. The programme aims at providing small island developing States in particular with the data necessary to make a claim to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for an extension of the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

37. The Government of Iceland sponsored a high-level round table and business and investment forum on international cooperation for sustainable development in Caribbean small island developing States in Barbados in March 2008. The sustainable management of fisheries was one of the principal areas of attention at the meeting, which was attended by 16 small island developing States in the Caribbean, the Government of Iceland, regional intergovernmental organizations, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and other United Nations programmes and agencies. The meeting set the basis for closer cooperation and the development of partnerships between Iceland and the Caribbean region.

38. Japan continues to provide assistance to the Caribbean member States in support of the Caribbean Sea initiative, through the Japan-CARICOM Friendship and Cooperation Fund. A grant of US$ 101,000 was made available in 2008 for flood forecasting in the region. Substantial support has been provided to CARICOM States for the financing of the construction of fisheries centres. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominica, Suriname, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and, most recently in 2007, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Japan is also supporting projects in Caribbean disaster management, fisheries resource management and sustainable tourism development.

III. Conclusion

39. **The contributions received from the entities of the United Nations system, regional organizations and donor countries in response to General Assembly resolution 61/197 demonstrate the degree of their interest in and commitment to efforts aimed at protecting the Caribbean Sea and its resources. The value of a collaborative approach to the management and protection of the shared resources of the Caribbean Sea is also highlighted. There is therefore much to be gained from the fullest implementation of the resolution by all Member States and relevant organizations. More active participation and reporting is therefore strongly encouraged.**

40. **The establishment of the Caribbean Sea Commission by the Association of Caribbean States also underscored the continued commitment of the member States of the wider Caribbean to work towards the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area. With the inauguration of its Plan of Action this year, it is expected that this objective will be pursued in an even more structured and substantive manner.**

Annex

Report of the Association of Caribbean States to the United Nations Secretary-General as requested in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 61/197: Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations

Introduction

1. The present report covers the activities of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) in respect of actions highlighted in General Assembly resolution 61/197, as well as other issues covered, as set out in paragraph 11 of the resolution:

> "Calls upon the international community, the United Nations system and the multilateral financial institutions, and invites the Global Environment Facility, within its mandate, to support actively the national and regional activities of the Caribbean States towards the promotion of the sustainable management of coastal and marine resources."

2. The report specifically deals with the issues covered in paragraphs 1-4 and 13 of resolution 61/197.[a]

3. Activities covered in some detail relate to: (a) sustainable tourism; (b) Caribbean Sea Commission; and (c) disaster reduction.

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[a] "Recognizes that the unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea require that Caribbean States and relevant regional and international development partners work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources, including, inter alia, the further development of their concept of the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law;"
"Takes note with interest of the creation by the Association of Caribbean States of the Commission on the Caribbean Sea;"
"Takes note of the effort of the Caribbean States to further develop their concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law, and invites the international community to recognize such efforts;"
"Recognizes the efforts of the Caribbean countries to create conditions leading to sustainable development aimed at combating poverty and inequality, and in this regard notes with interest the initiatives of the Association of Caribbean States in the focal areas of sustainable tourism, trade, transport and natural disasters;"
"Calls upon Member States to improve as a matter of priority their emergency response capabilities and the containment of environmental damage, particularly in the Caribbean Sea, in the event of natural disasters or of an accident or incident relating to maritime navigation."

Plan of Action and priorities of the Caribbean Sea Commission emanating from the work programme

I. Introduction

Scientific argument for designating the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development

4. The peoples of the Caribbean are defined by the Sea whose shores they inhabit. In the rich diversity of cultures and nations making up the region, the one uniting factor is the marine ecosystem, on which each ultimately depends.

5. If that ecosystem is under threat, so are the livelihoods of millions of people. The economic activity of the Caribbean is based to a very great extent on the bounty of the Sea and the natural beauty which attracts visitors from around the world, which in turn require the healthy functioning of complex physical and biological processes. The coral reefs and the seagrass beds, the white-sand beaches and the fish shoals of the open ocean: these are natural capital assets whose loss or degradation has huge implications for the development of the region.

6. Apart from the economic importance of the ecosystem, it shapes the lives of all the inhabitants of the Caribbean in ways which defy statistical analysis. The Sea and its coasts form the stage on which the cultural, spiritual and recreational life of the region is played out.

7. It may be united by its sea, but the Caribbean region is divided by its history. Five hundred years of settlement by Europeans, Africans, Asians and people from other parts of the Americas has bequeathed to the region a patchwork of independent States and numerous colonies administered by Governments in a different hemisphere. This presents unique challenges to the establishment of the cooperative policies needed to manage this ecosystem for the common good, and to achieve the most secure long-term future for the Caribbean peoples.

8. The situation is made even more complex by the impact of decisions on the ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea. These decisions are usually made in parts of the world with no direct territorial link to the region: from the use of the waters for fishing by Asian fleets and by international shipping, including the transport of nuclear waste en route to the Panama Canal and oil shipments from the Middle East to refineries in the Gulf of Mexico to the pollution and sediments carried by rivers from deep inside the South American continent; and even the energy choices of societies throughout the world which have major implications for the Caribbean Sea, particularly in the light of the threat of global warming.

9. These complex factors combine to create an urgent need for a new partnership between the international community and Caribbean Sea countries to secure a sustainable future for Caribbean peoples while respecting international norms and Conventions.

10. Four major global scientific integrated environmental assessment processes initiated or funded by the United Nations have recognized the central importance of the natural resources of the Caribbean Sea to the economic and social well-being of its peoples. These assessments have also recognized that the sustainability of the

services provided by these resources is threatened by damaging human-related activities.

11. For example, the Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), completed in 2006, did a diagnostic of the reasons for the degradation of the Caribbean Sea and identified the main drivers of ecosystem degradation as coastal land use change, pollution and over-exploitation of natural resources. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) completed in 2007 a further sub-global component called the Caribbean Sea Assessment (CARSEA), which assessed the major ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being. Caribbean Sea fisheries were determined to be worth more than one billion United States dollars per annum, while the Caribbean was shown to be the most dependent region in the world on tourism. This assessment highlighted the lack of integrated management as a major driver of change and recommended the formation of Caribbean Sea Technical Commission to deal with the problem.

12. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) completed its main reports in 2007 and highlighted the particular vulnerability of the small islands of the Caribbean and low lying States of Central America to extreme events and disasters, as well as sea level rise and coral bleaching. The attendant loss of resources from climate change was projected to have a significant effect on, among other things, amenity value of the region for tourism. The Global Environmental Outlook 4 (GEO4), launched at the United Nations in 2007, further confirmed that effects such as climate change are additive to the already serious long-standing problems such as degraded coasts and polluted seas.

13. Three key messages can be highlighted from these assessments. First, some of the vital services which human communities derive from the Caribbean Sea ecosystem are being placed in jeopardy, often by the very activities and industries whose long-term future depends on the continuing provision of those services. Second, a reduction in the stresses being placed on the natural functions of the Caribbean Sea will require new ways of working together among the disparate political authorities making up the region. Finally, the combination of dependence on the integrity of its marine ecosystem and vulnerability to global forces beyond its control puts the Caribbean in a special position which merits recognition and concrete action by the international community.

The Sea and its people

14. The semi-enclosed Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) is a distinct ecological region, bounded to the north by the Bahamas and the Florida Keys, to the east by the Windward Islands, to the south by the South American continent, and to the west by the isthmus of Central America. Covering an area of more than 3.2 million square kilometres, it is the second largest sea in the world, after the Mediterranean Sea. The Caribbean Sea is however special when compared to all other LMEs in that it has the largest number of countries surrounding it in the world (see enclosure, fig. 1). Further, the disproportionate number of maritime boundaries imposes special challenges with regard to governance of the living resources of the maritime space.

15. The Caribbean, home to more than 116 million people, is divided among 22 independent States, of which 9 are continental countries of South and Central America, and the remainder islands and archipelagos. In addition, four colonial

powers — the United States, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands — still exercise political control over 11 island territories in the region.

16. The complex political structure, produced by the historic struggles for control of the resources of the Caribbean, and reflecting a wide cultural diversity arising from that history, has left the region with a series of overlapping regional authorities exercising varying degrees of policy coordination over parts of the Sea. This creates a significant problem in the exercise of a holistic approach to the management of the Caribbean Sea ecosystem.

17. What unites the people inhabiting this region is a common dependence on two particular products of the marine ecosystem, referred to as ecosystem services. These are tourism and fishing. Both activities strongly illustrate the interdependence of human well-being, economics and the environment within the context of sustainable development.

18. Are people in the Caribbean more dependent on tourism and fishing than other seas of the world? A few facts and figures help to justify why the Caribbean Sea is special in the context of sustainable development.

19. Tourism in the Caribbean region is based on the high amenity value of its ecosystems. According to World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) assessment of the 14 major tourism regions of the world, relative to its size the island population of the Caribbean is more dependent on income from tourism than that of any other part of the world. In 2004, more than 2.4 million people were employed either directly or indirectly in travel and tourism, accounting for 15.5 per cent of total employment, a proportion nearly twice as high as the global average. The sector contributed US$ 28.4 billion to the gross domestic product (GDP), 13 per cent of the total, and US$ 19 billion, or 16 per cent, of exported services and merchandise. Over one fifth (21.7 per cent) of all capital investment was linked to tourism, well over twice the global average. On several islands tourism accounts for more than 90 per cent of GDP. The wider Caribbean also has even more tourist visitors than the small island developing States (SIDS), especially the Central American countries, such as Mexico, in Cancún and Cozumel, and Costa Rica.

20. Twenty-five million tourists choose to holiday in the Caribbean each year, in large part in pursuit of a dream of sensuous relaxation shaped by its natural features — palm-fringed beaches, blue-green lagoons with crystal-clear water, opportunities to see multicoloured fish swimming among coral reefs. Dependence on tourism, therefore, also implies dependence on the capacity of nature to continue providing the conditions which make the Caribbean such a popular destination. In cases such as the diving industry, this connection is so close that degradation of ecosystem quality can be measured directly in lost income.

21. Since tourism is the main economic activity of most of the greater Caribbean States and the Caribbean Sea is recognized by the ACS member States and Associate Members as a common asset and a potential unifier in their development, the Leaders of the ACS signed the Convention establishing the Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean (STZC), in December 2001.

22. The Sustainable Tourism Zone of the Caribbean will expand as a network of communities and countries committed to ensuring that tourism is not only providing economical benefits, but that its benefits are also reaching all levels of the

population, enhancing the protections of the natural and cultural values, today and in the future.

23. The process to select and evaluate destinations to become part of the STZC is one of the main projects being implemented. The objective is to further develop the sustainable tourism indicators as identified in the Convention and to create practical tools for destinations managers to monitor the sustainability of the tourism sector in their areas. The indicators in the STZC Convention can be categorized as social, economic and environmental indicators. Five destinations have already been evaluated in the pilot phase. Seven other destinations are currently being evaluated.

24. Fishing is also a significant provider of jobs and income in the Caribbean. It is estimated that more than 200,000 people in the region are directly employed, either full-time or part-time, as fishers. In addition, some 100,000 work in processing and marketing of fish, with additional job opportunities in net-making, boatbuilding and other supporting industries. Assuming each person employed has five dependents, more than 1.5 million people in the Caribbean rely for their livelihood on commercial fishing. The activity also brings in approximately US$ 1.2 billion annually in export earnings (see enclosure, fig. 2), with the United States the principal destination.

25. However, the true importance of fishing is not fully reflected in these figures. In a region where most of the population has access to the Sea, fish provide a vital resource for poor communities in ways which do not always appear on the national accounts. It is estimated, for example, that fish products account for 7 per cent of the protein consumed by people in the Caribbean region. Anything which damages the productivity of the marine food chain is therefore a significant threat both to the health and to the wealth of these societies.

26. A number of factors set the Caribbean apart and present particular problems in protecting fish stocks for future generations. One is the sheer variety of fish and invertebrates involved in commercial fishing. This makes it extremely difficult to monitor and manage the stocks sustainably.

27. Another problem arises from the lack of an agreed regional regime with responsibility for the resources of the Caribbean (see enclosure, fig. 3). Existing arrangements enable fishing fleets from throughout the world to engage in a "free for all", placing added pressure on the marine life of the Sea. The Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem (CLME) Project, however, proposes a nested fisheries governance framework in which the proposed resolution will provide a platform for cooperation between countries at the global level of the United Nations General Assembly (see enclosure, fig. 4). In summary, there is evidence that environmental degradation is undermining development and threatens future development progress. It emphasizes that Millennium Development Goal 7, "environmental sustainability", is critical to the attainment of the other Millennium Development Goals and that more effective integrated policy responses are needed at all levels of governance.

28. These ideas have been generally accepted in resolution 61/197 ("Towards the sustainable development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations") adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-first session in 2006. For example, it is stated in paragraph 1 of the resolution that the General Assembly "Recognizes that the unique biodiversity and highly fragile ecosystem of the Caribbean Sea require the Caribbean States and relevant regional and international

development partners work together to develop and implement regional initiatives to promote the sustainable conservation and management of coastal and marine resources including, inter alia, the further development of their concept of the designation of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development, without prejudice to relevant international law."

29. In order to advance General Assembly resolution 61/197 within the General Assembly, the ACS Caribbean Sea Commission (CSC) has worked together with regional and international development partners to develop the following significant regional initiatives for the sustainable conservation and management of the Caribbean Sea: (a) developed an institutional framework for Caribbean Sea governance; (b) prepared a legal framework; and (c) collaborated with IOCARIBE, UWI and others in advancing the GEF-funded (US$ 6 million) Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project.

II. Plan of Action

Institutional framework

Entities being established

30. The Caribbean Sea Commission has agreed to form:

- A Bureau comprising the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs and the secretariat
- A legal subcommission
- A scientific and technical subcommission
- A governance, public information and outreach subcommission
- A budget committee.

31. The Bureau will be responsible for oversight of the work of the Commission, initiating actions in respect of relations with external entities and preparation of the annual report to the Ministerial Council.

32. The subcommissions will be chaired by national experts.

Composition and terms of references of the subcommissions

33. The subcommissions will support the mandate of the CSC in three specific areas by:

- Clarifying the information that the CSC requires to meet its mandate to provide advice to the ACS Ministerial Council
- Identifying individuals, organizations or projects that can provide the expertise and information needed
- Coordinating the acquisition, review and synthesis of the information needed
- Formulating or overseeing the formulation of draft advisory documents for consideration by the CSC
- Obtaining and providing clarification as requested by the CSC on any submitted draft advisory documents in a timely manner.

34. The suggested areas of competence of the three subcommissions are:

Scientific and technical subcommission

All scientific and technical aspects relating to the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, including but not limited to status of scientific capacity, status of fisheries, drivers and pressures resulting in habitat degradation and pollution from various sources, and their socio-economic and ecological impacts on the Caribbean Sea;

Governance, public information and outreach subcommission

All institutional arrangements that may relate to the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, including but not limited to status and role of regional and subregional bodies, national coordination, the role of civil society, the identification of stakeholders, consequences of decision-making affecting the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea on stakeholders and the delivery of information and awareness materials to stakeholders;

Legal subcommission

All legal arrangements required among stakeholders that may be required to facilitate the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea, including but not limited to the establishment of regional and subregional organizations, and status and implications of multilateral environmental agreements. The major area of competence of the legal subcommission will be overseeing the good faith implementation of the legal regime adopted by the ACS Ministerial Council and taking all the legal steps necessary to promote the declaration of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development.

35. These areas necessarily overlap and there will be close collaboration among these committees in their work.

Institutional recognition of the Caribbean Sea Commission

36. The CSC will sign memorandums of understanding with regional centres of expertise related to its work programme. Members of the Commission and its subcommissions will recommend these centres.

Legal framework

37. Consistent with Agreement No. 14/07 and No. 3/08, the Secretary-General will write the United Nations Secretary-General requesting a high-level team of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea to meet the mandate of General Assembly resolution 61/197. This will be prior to taking steps to set up the Conference of Oceans and Law of the Sea Experts.

ACS Conference of Oceans and Law of the Sea Experts

38. Following are points of information regarding the Conference:

Juridical underpinnings

(a) Convention establishing the ACS;

(b) Ministerial Council Agreements No. 6/06, No. 14/07 and No. 3/08;

(c) General Assembly resolution 61/197;

(d) ACS Summit Declarations.

Objectives

(a) To design a legal regime that will be legally binding upon the membership of the Association of Caribbean States and will govern the operation and implementation of the declaration of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development;

(b) The regime, which will be formally adopted by the Ministerial Council of the Association, will operate:

(i) Without prejudice to the existing rights and obligations of members of the Association;

(ii) Without prejudice to international law, particularly the international law of the sea;

(iii) Consistently in keeping with the spirit of operative paragraph 1 of General Assembly resolution 61/197 and succeeding General Assembly resolutions.

Preparatory activities

(a) Consultant to be contracted to draft a working paper for the Conference — 2 months;

(b) Review of the working paper by the legal and the technical and scientific subcommissions of the Caribbean Sea Commission;

(c) Review and approval of the working paper, as revised by the subcommissions, by the plenary of the Caribbean Sea Commission.

Conference participants

(a) Legal subcommission of the CSC;

(b) Scientific and technical subcommission of the CSC;

(c) Oceans and Law of the Sea Experts of members and associate members;

(d) Representative of the Founding Observers of the ACS;

(e) Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea;

(f) Observers from:

(i) Interested third States;

(ii) Institutions of the United Nations system and competent international organizations;

(iii) Competent NGOs, academic institutions and other stakeholders.

Format and modus operandi

(a) Six sessions over a 12-month period, with the possibility of it being extended, upon the motion of the Conference and with the concurrence of the Commission;

(b) The Conference will be held in the host country, or in a member or associate member State of the ACS, if it is determined to be in a position to host the meeting;

(c) The Conference will work in the three official languages of the Association;

(d) The chairmanship of the Bureau of the Conference and any subsidiary entities established will be chaired utilizing the group method as practiced within the ACS. This is without prejudice to the Conference inviting:

(i) Expert members of the Commission;

(ii) Founding Observers of the ACS;

(iii) Other individuals or entities identified to preside over working groups charged with specific tasks aimed at facilitating the achievement of the objectives of the Conference;

(e) The ACS Secretariat will be Rapporteur to the Conference.

Financial issues

39. The Conference will be financed from resources emanating from:

(a) The budget of the Commission;

(b) Financial assistance from individual members or associate members of the ACS;

(c) Disinterested contributions from third States or entities;

(d) Financial and/or technical assistance from the United Nations system and the international community as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 61/197;

(e) Members and associate members, which shall be responsible for financing the participation of their delegations.

Final document

40. The final document of the Conference will be presented to the Ministerial Council for adoption and for transmission by the Ministerial Council to a special summit of Head of States or Government of the Association. The host Head of State or Government of the special summit shall be requested to present the final document of the Conference to the United Nations General Assembly.

Scientific and technical issues

Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project (CLME)

41. The full CLME project proposal was approved by the GEF on 11 April 2008, and implementation will begin shortly. The GEF has approved US$ 6 million and

the countries of the region are providing more than US$ 40 million of in-kind support. The job of Regional Project Coordinator for the CLME project has been advertised and the appointee will assume office at IOCAROIBE in Cartagena, Colombia. The CLME Project will focus on fisheries governance initially. Further funding will have to be raised to expand the project to deal with other issues such as pollution.

Project goal

42. Sustainable management of the shared living marine resources of the Caribbean LME and adjacent areas through an integrated management approach that will meet the World Summit on Sustainable Development targets for sustainable fisheries.

43. The specific objectives are:

- To identify, analyse and agree upon major issues, root causes and actions required to achieve sustainable management of the shared living marine resources (LMRs) in the Caribbean Sea LME in a manner that is consistent with relevant international agreements, e.g. the Law of the Sea, the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement
- To improve the shared knowledge base for sustainable use and management of the transboundary LMRs by compiling and sharing existing information, filling critical data gaps and improving databases for assessments, planning and policy formulation
- To implement legal, policy and institutional reforms to achieve sustainable transboundary LMR management
- To develop an institutional and procedural approach to LME level monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Project components

44. The key components of the full size project are:

- Characterize and analyse the root and underlying causes of transboundary issues relating to the management of marine resources in the CLME through the mechanism of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and develop and agree on a Strategic Action Programme to address those causes
- Compile and share existing sources of information required for good governance of marine resources, and identification and filling of knowledge gaps through appropriate technical programmes
- Establish a culture of networking and cooperation among the countries for management of marine resources, focusing on strengthening existing institutions and structures
- Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for the ecosystem status of the CLME in line with the ecosystem management approach and Strategic Action Plan implementation
- Create successes that serve as examples of how countries can collaborate to manage transboundary marine resources through "strengthening by doing"

- The Association of Caribbean States and its Caribbean Sea Commission are expected to play a major role in the governance dimension of the project, thus ensuring that scientific and technical outputs find their way into the relevant national and regional policy cycle and consequential implementation.
- The ACS Secretariat will take the formal steps necessary to establish the association as a co-financing partner of the Project.

III. ACS High-level Conference on Disaster Reduction

45. The Heads of State and Government of the ACS members, at their fourth summit held in Panama City, Panama, on 29 July 2005, acknowledged the vulnerability of our countries and territories to disasters and the negative impact they have on efforts to ensure sustainable development. They also shared the idea that integrating disaster management and risk reduction into development policies and plans at all levels of government is the best way to combat vulnerability to disasters. Further, they reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation, particularly at the regional level, in order to strengthen the national and regional bodies dedicated to the disaster risk reduction.

46. Consequently, the ACS Special Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction is set to organize a Conference to exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices in the areas of disaster risk reduction, and to determine areas of intra-regional cooperation in view of the sheer number of initiatives in our region, the scant resources and the heterogeneity of the different actors.

47. The High-level Conference on Disaster Reduction of the Association of Caribbean States was held from 14 to 16 November 2007 in Saint-Marc, Republic of Haiti. This first-ever meeting on the subject for the countries of the Greater Caribbean was attended by delegations from 21 ACS members (including ministers, high-ranking disaster reduction specialists and experienced diplomats), over 18 international and regional organizations as well as members of civil society. In all, over 120 delegates participated in the Conference.

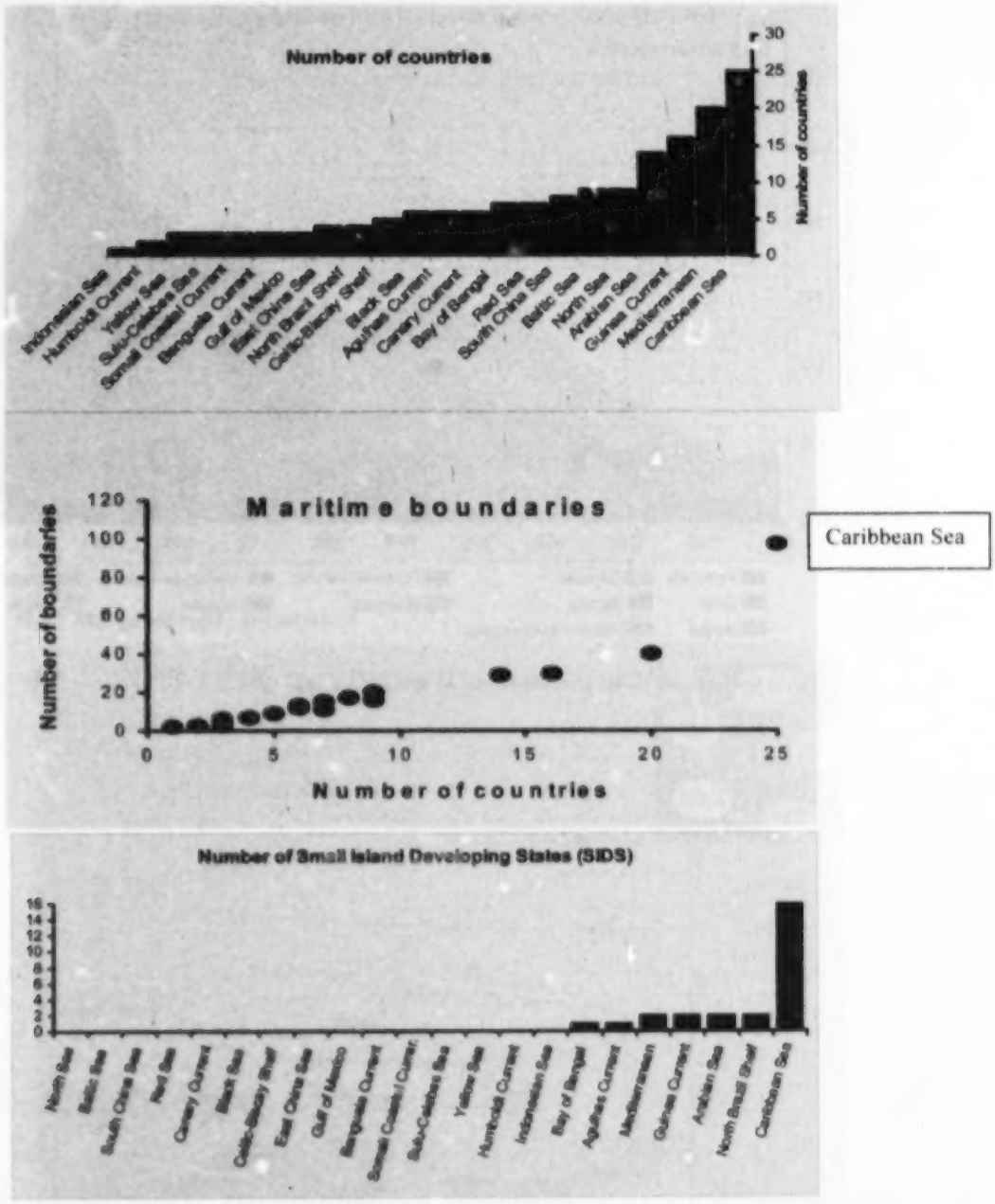
48. The Conference was financed by the Government of the Republic of Haiti, ACS, the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), and the Government of the Republic of Turkey. Crucial technical and other support was also provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the ISDR, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency, the Centro de Coordinación de la Prevención de Desastres Naturales en América Central, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Pan American Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme.

49. The Saint-Marc Plan of Action, as the Outcome of the Conference, has been endorsed by the ACS Ministerial Council as a 27-point document which will soon inform the Work Programme of the ACS in the area of disaster risk reduction. The Saint-Marc POA takes into account, inter alia, the five priorities for action stemming from the Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held in 2005.

50. The Saint-Marc Conference is a milestone not only for the ACS, but for all the international and regional organizations involved in disaster reduction in the greater Caribbean region. The Conference raised the profile of the ACS as an ideal forum for bringing together countries that may vary greatly in size and culture yet share the same vulnerabilities, and creates a framework for deliverables in the work of the ACS in disaster risk reduction and its link to the international agenda agreed at the United Nations.

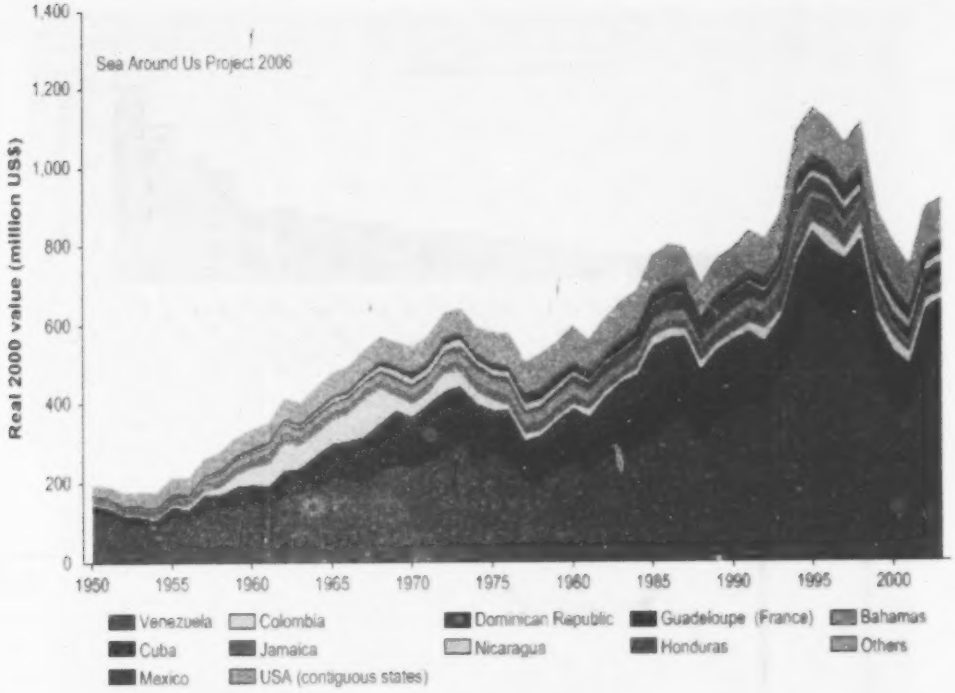
Enclosure

Figure 1.
Geopolitical complexity of the Caribbean Sea Large Marine Ecosystem



Source: Caribbean Large Marine Ecosystem Project, University of the West Indies (UWI).

Figure 2.
The annual value of Caribbean Sea Fisheries



Source: Seas Around Us Project, University of British Columbia (UBC).

Figure 3.
Overlapping and nested fisheries related organizations in the Caribbean

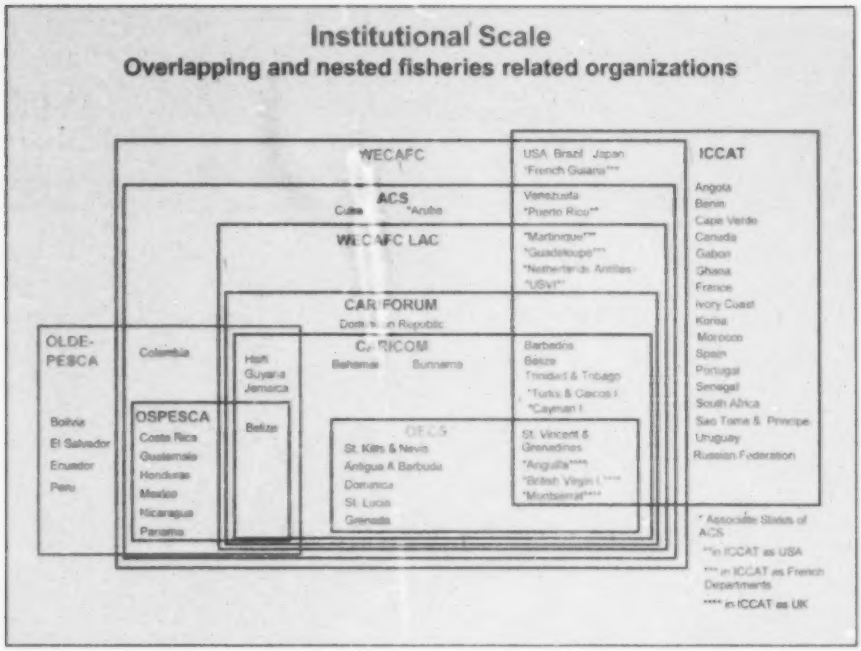


Figure 4.
The LME governance framework